

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON REMOTE INDIGENOUS HOUSING (NPARIH)



Review of Progress (2008-2013)

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REVIEW OF PROGRESS (2008-2013)

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Section 1. Summary of Key Findings

Governments are on track to deliver the outcomes of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) by 2018. Halfway through the Partnership, at the end of 2012, targets for capital works and Indigenous employment have been exceeded. Data from the 2011 ABS Census indicate that inroads are being made into reducing severe overcrowding in locations where there has been NPARIH investment. Comprehensive property and tenancy management reforms are underway in all jurisdictions, and are largely on track to meet the agreed 2015 full implementation target.

1.1. Reducing Severe Overcrowding

The 2011 ABS Census data shows some reduction in the proportion of Indigenous households experiencing both overcrowding and *severe* overcrowding in remote Australia. It is important to note that the 2011 Census took place ahead of the delivery of major capital works in a number of jurisdictions. The full impact of this work is not reflected in these data.

The following information is worth noting:

- Since commencement in 2008, NPARIH jurisdictional reporting has indicated a reduction in severe overcrowding in communities where there has been capital works investment under the NPARIH.
- From NPARIH commencement in 2008 to August 2011 (Census month), 843 new houses and 3255 refurbishments were completed with inroads into reducing severe overcrowding being made as a result.
- Overall, ABS Census data indicates, levels of overcrowding in Indigenous households in remote Australia have reduced from 22.3 per cent in 2006 to 20.1 per cent in 2011, and from 40.5 per cent to 38.9 per cent in very remote Australia.
- Similarly, the proportion of severely overcrowded households in remote Australia has reduced from 5.1 per cent in 2006 to 3.9 per cent in 2011, and from 16.3 to 15.0 per cent in very remote Australia.
- Since the Census, the number of new houses completed has almost doubled to around 1600, and the number of refurbishments now completed is over 5200, significantly exceeding expectations and ensuring further progress in addressing severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities.
- By 2018, the NPARIH will have delivered 4200 new houses and, by the end of 2014, over 6600 refurbishments will have been completed.
- In Remote Service Delivery (RSD) communities, where significant NPARIH investment had been made ahead of the 2011 Census, ABS data shows a reduction in the proportion of Indigenous households that are overcrowded, from 57.9 per cent in 2006 to 53.3 per cent in 2011 – a decline of 4.6 percentage points overall.
- In addition, by the time of the 2011 Census, ABS data for RSD communities shows that the proportion of Indigenous households subject to severe overcrowding (i.e. requiring three or more additional bedrooms) fell from 31.3 per cent in 2006 to 24.8 per cent in 2011 – a fall of 6.4 percentage points.

1.2. Increasing the Supply of New Houses and Improving the Condition of Existing Houses

The agreed target for new houses under the NPARIH is 4200 by 2018. At 30 June 2012, 1401 new houses had been delivered against this target. At the time of drafting this report the number had increased to around 1600.

In a number of the larger remote communities, whole new subdivisions of housing have been constructed or are underway to help alleviate overcrowding in those communities.

Figure 1. Maningrida, Northern Territory



In addition, by 30 June 2012, 4707 refurbishments or rebuilds had been delivered. Since this time, the total number of rebuilds and refurbishments delivered is over 5200 houses – sometimes to add more bedrooms or a bathroom – but primarily to ensure houses are safe, healthy and secure for the families living in them. This has exceeded the NPARIH 2014 target of 4876 refurbishments two years ahead of time. There is now an increased target for refurbishments of 6696 for delivery by 2014, an increase of more than 1800 over the original target.

This has been possible because of the willingness and commitment of some jurisdictions to deliver more refurbishments than the original targets required, and others to deliver at a quicker pace than expected.

Implementation started slowly as the preparation and ground work for construction was undertaken, with some factors in particular making a significant impact on increasing momentum:

- The introduction of a biennial competitive bids process, following the renegotiation of the NPARIH in late 2009, provided added incentive to meet agreed targets.
- The competitive bid arrangement allows for up to 25 per cent per year of a jurisdiction's capital works funding to be reallocated if agreed targets are not met.
- It provides flexibility over an amount of funding for housing authorities to tailor investment to emerging need within their jurisdictions and to take up opportunities for innovative approaches as they arise.
- There has been a high level of public scrutiny of the program, mainly focussed on capital works progress in the Northern Territory, with intense interest from the media and various parliamentary committees, both Commonwealth and Northern Territory, including several reviews conducted into aspects of the program.
- While responding to this level of scrutiny has at times been resource intensive for those involved, it has also provided additional incentive to consistently strive to lift performance across all jurisdictions.

Figure 2. Woorabinda, Queensland



1.3. Infrastructure Support and Municipal and Essential Services

A National Audit of Municipal and Essential Services (the National Audit) was undertaken in 2009-10, as part of NPARIH, to assess the outstanding need for infrastructure and essential services in remote Indigenous communities, and to start clarifying ongoing roles and responsibilities of governments. It identified outstanding need in a number of locations, but also identified reliability of infrastructure and essential services as a critical issue.

Significant need remains for reliable infrastructure and essential services in many communities to ensure public health and safety standards are maintained, and to support additional housing in the future. Already infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities is at capacity in some locations. The infrastructure gap will grow without further investment in capital works for infrastructure asset replacement and upgrades.

Nevertheless, the National Audit suggests the issue will not be resolved through additional financial investment alone, and signals the need for a more strategic approach and reform to asset management, demand management and workforce planning across state regional and local government planning processes.

Work is ongoing between governments to resolve these matters, with a report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) due in 2013.

NPARIH funding for housing-related infrastructure has resulted in major upgrades to capital infrastructure, such as water storage, sewer ponds, roads and pipes, in eight communities in the Northern Territory.

Figure 3. Hope Vale, Queensland



1.4. Indigenous Employment

The NPARIH set an Indigenous employment target of 20 per cent during construction, over the life of the NPARIH. All states and the Northern Territory have consistently achieved or exceeded this target.

The Northern Territory also set Indigenous employment targets of 40 per cent for property management and 50 per cent for tenancy management and has exceeded these targets.

Government procurement processes were reviewed to ensure there were no unintended barriers to achieving the Indigenous employment outcomes under the NPARIH.

While not a NPARIH specific responsibility, the challenge in all jurisdictions is to ensure the focus on recruiting and retaining Indigenous people into ongoing employment is maintained where jobs and enterprise development opportunities are available. This might include opportunities in emerging property and tenancy management jobs within communities or outside communities, with employers based locally or in regional towns and cities.

Employment service providers contracted under the Commonwealth Government's new Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) can play an important role in ensuring that local Indigenous people, who gained valuable skills and experience on NPARIH construction work, are able to transition into other job opportunities either in their communities or in other locations.

1.5. Employment Related Accommodation

An aim of the NPARIH is to provide access to affordable accommodation in regional centres for Indigenous people from remote communities who want to take up employment, education or training opportunities. This is an important linkage for people from remote communities wanting to take up jobs or education outside their communities, and should also be a critical linkage for RJCP providers.

By the end of January 2013, more than 90 facilities were in place across Australia. In some cases, hostels have been constructed in regional centres and in other locations new, family-style housing has been built.

As the NPARIH progresses it will important to focus on improving ways of attracting people from remote communities where there has been long-term, multi-generational unemployment and often few role models for education or jobs.

In New South Wales and other jurisdictions, the government housing agency is working closely with employers and academic institutions to assist with a smooth transition into education and/or employment¹.

1.6. Property and Tenancy Management

Across states and the Northern Territory, property and tenancy management arrangements are being put in place to align with state public housing models, including fair rent setting and regular rent collection, tenant support and education services and ongoing repairs and maintenance programs.

There has been considerable progress with property and tenancy management implementation overall, but key elements such as reformed rent setting and tenant support services have not kept pace with capital works delivery in all jurisdictions. The need for ongoing tenant support and engagement with tenants about rights and responsibilities is particularly important.

¹ Discussions with NSW Housing representatives, January 2013

There is recognition across the board that these are critical components of effective property and tenancy management regimes that will help ensure sustainability of the housing investment made through the NPARIH.

The agreed target for full implementation of property and tenancy management is 2015 and there will need to be sustained focus on delivery against all key elements over the next two years to ensure this objective is reached.

Greater transparency and clearer benchmarks for the different elements of this important reform may assist the task, and there is an opportunity for governments to review this issue when Implementation Plans (IPs) are renegotiated this year.

1.7. Land Reform

As the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Service Delivery identifies, the absence of mainstream land use planning regimes or other investment safeguards, such as building codes and consumer warranty protections, has resulted in poorly planned and constructed communities².

Progressively resolving tenure issues on community-titled land is required to secure government and commercial investment and to enable opportunities for private home ownership and economic development. For government investment in social housing, long term leases are required to enable secure management of the housing stock.

Each jurisdiction has approached this issue differently in view of the diverse range of legislative arrangements in place at the state level, which can underpin land reform.

There has been significant progress across jurisdictions in negotiating long-term leases or similar instruments to enable social housing investment.

Resolving land reform issues to support private home ownership and economic and commercial investment has proved more complex and will require greater focus in the second half of the NPARIH. There are some emerging home ownership developments, particularly in NSW and Queensland.

1.8. Challenges

Despite impressive progress, it was clear during the review that none of the governments involved in the NPARIH underestimates the challenges ahead, particularly in terms of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the housing investment.

Coming from a historically low base in most jurisdictions, continuing the momentum of capital works delivery and embedding the comprehensive property and tenancy management reforms, which are critical to underpin long-term sustainability and help address severe overcrowding, are challenging issues.

Another significant challenge is ensuring that the fundamental change for tenants through the property and tenancy management reforms is effective, and that tenants moving into

² Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services (2011), *Six Monthly Report April 2011-September 2011*, Canberra, Australia

improved housing understand their rights and responsibilities for paying fair rent, caring for their houses and notifying authorities if repairs and maintenance are required.

Ensuring there is long-term financial sustainability is also challenging in an environment where, unlike mainstream public housing arrangements, it is not generally possible for governments to divest land and buildings to the open market for public housing re-development. A number of governments have identified this as an area where further policy effort is required, particularly around land and economic development reforms.

A greater focus is required, in the ongoing years of the NPARIH, on breaking through remaining barriers to private home ownership and economic investment more broadly to ensure these opportunities are available to people in remote Indigenous communities.

Similarly, the issue of infrastructure capacity, ongoing maintenance and infrastructure investment in remote Indigenous communities, essential to support additional housing investment, is critical and challenging for governments, with work continuing on resolving this issue.

These challenges sit within a number of broader Indigenous policy considerations, particularly the changing demographics of remote Indigenous communities and the limited prospects for future economic activity in some remote Indigenous communities.

Some challenges are practical implementation issues, which should be addressed to ensure continuing good progress over the remaining years of the NPARIH.

Other challenges are longer term and will be most critical post 2018, the final year of the NPARIH. Across jurisdictions, those involved in NPARIH implementation have noted in the context of this review the need for ongoing collaborative policy effort between governments to determine next steps.

1.9. COAG Reform Council

The COAG Reform Council, which is responsible for high-level oversight and monitoring of all COAG Agreements, released its latest *Report on Progress* in late September 2012.

It noted that NPARIH milestones have been fully or largely met with no significant risks identified to achieving the reform³.

³ COAG Reform Council, 2012, *COAG reform agenda; Report on Progress*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney, Australia

Section 2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background and Policy Context

The NPARIH (Appendix 1) is a comprehensive COAG reform strategy that aims to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities within 10 years to June 2018. It is a National Partnership, and a critical part of two major COAG agreements:

- The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) which commenced in 2009 with the objective of ensuring all Australians have access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing that contributes to social and economic participation.
- The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA), agreed by all governments in 2008, which sets out the COAG framework for Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage over the long term. The NIRA includes, in Schedule E, a set of *Investment Principles in Remote Communities* to guide investment under COAG National Partnership Agreements (**Appendix 2**).

COAG's Closing the Gap plan has six specific targets to address the gap in life expectancy, mortality rates, education and employment outcomes. The approach depends on making progress against several 'building blocks' – early childhood, schooling, health, healthy homes, safe communities, economic participation, governance and leadership.

The NPARIH focuses effort on the healthy homes building block in remote Indigenous communities. It takes account of views expressed by Indigenous people in remote communities over many years that better maintained, less crowded housing is essential for their children to sleep well, go to school and grow up healthy⁴. Building and maintaining safe, healthy and secure homes in remote communities contributes to all of the Closing the Gap targets.

The NPARIH has reformed responsibilities between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities. It established the Commonwealth as the major funder of remote Indigenous housing over the life of the 10-year strategy, with state and the Northern Territory governments responsible for service delivery against a set of agreed objectives.

Those objectives are:

- Significantly reducing severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities.
- Increasing the supply of new houses and improving the condition of existing houses in remote Indigenous communities.
- Ensuring rental houses are well maintained and managed in remote Indigenous communities.

Achievement of the objectives is supported by a range of outputs set out in the NPARIH and addressed in this Report in Section 3 on Progress with Implementing the Objectives and Outputs.

⁴ reiterated in comments in the 'Stronger Futures Consultations Report 2011, pp64-68

The total Commonwealth investment through the NPARIH over the 10 years is \$5.5 billion. This included new funding of \$1.94 billion and incorporated funding from the former Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation (ARIA) program and the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) in the Northern Territory which, at that time, was in the very early stages of implementation. With this funding, governments committed to building 4200 new houses and refurbishing more than 4800 houses, to benefit over 9000 Indigenous families in remote Indigenous communities across the country⁵.

This was the most significant financial investment made to provide and upgrade public housing in remote Indigenous communities, and the governments involved were committed to capitalise on opportunities such a large scale, potentially once in a lifetime, injection of funding provided. In light of this, governments agreed the investment had to be underpinned by systemic reform of existing remote Indigenous housing arrangements. Necessary housing-related infrastructure had to be upgraded in parallel to support the new housing construction. The work done had to be sustainable and governments had to be able to control and effectively manage the assets over the long term. The houses had to be built to comply with Australian construction standards and the National Indigenous Housing Guide and managed to a public housing standard, to last up to 30 years rather than the average seven year life that had become the norm in many remote locations.

To help achieve this, governments agreed on a comprehensive package of reforms to support the capital investment. These included:

- Robust and standardised tenancy management arrangements, based on public housing standards, to ensure rental houses are well maintained, rent is set at an appropriate level and collected, support services to tenants are in place and an ongoing maintenance and repairs program is established.
- Secure tenure arrangements for housing assets, including long-term leases, which respect the role and interests of the Traditional Owners of the land, while protecting the government investment, providing clarity about government responsibility for effectively managing and maintaining the houses over the long-term and, importantly, paving the way for improved land administration and long term town planning in the remote communities.
- Employment, training and economic development opportunities for Indigenous people in construction and housing management, with a 20 per cent Indigenous employment target set for the construction phase.
- Access for Indigenous people from remote communities to affordable accommodation in regional centres to support employment, education and training opportunities and access to support services in those locations.
- Facilitating home ownership, economic development and commercial investment opportunities for Indigenous people in remote communities.
- The development of clearer roles, responsibilities and funding arrangements for municipal services and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and essential services in remote areas.

In addition, more than \$400 million was made available under NPARIH related arrangements for state governments to reform Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs)

⁵ Joint Media Release, 30 November 2008, Prime Minister , the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, and the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for FAHCSIA.

operating in regional and urban areas within their jurisdictions, and ensure those organisations meet the same standards expected of organisations operating in the state community housing system.

2.2. NPARIH Governance

2.2.1. Reporting and Monitoring

The Commonwealth was required to jointly develop and agree to Implementation Plans with each state and the Northern Territory. The plans include timelines for achieving performance benchmarks set out in the NPARIH. The current set of Implementation Plans cover the period from the commencement of the NPARIH to 30 June 2013. They are jointly reviewed on an annual basis but can be amended at any time by agreement between the parties, to reflect emerging issues.

The states and the Northern Territory are required to report to the Commonwealth on an annual basis, detailing progress against the performance indicators and timelines in their Implementation Plans. They do this through Annual Status Reports (ASRs). The Commonwealth is required to provide feedback to the states and the Northern Territory on the Annual Status Reports, and on compliance with targets and benchmarks. The annual reporting is underpinned by additional regular reporting on aspects of the NPARIH throughout the year.

Appendix 3 provides overview information on each on each state and the Northern Territory.

2.2.2. Governance

The Commonwealth Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and Minister for Disability Reform, is responsible for certifying that payments may be made to the states and the Northern Territory on the basis of achievements against performance milestones in the Implementation Plans.

To monitor progress and resolve issues on an ongoing basis, Joint Steering Committees have been established for each jurisdiction, comprising senior officials from the Commonwealth and the relevant states or the Northern Territory. These meet several times a year.

If issues are unable to be resolved through this process, they can be escalated to relevant Ministers.

2.2.3. Renegotiation of NPARIH - Biennial Competitive Bids

The NPARIH was renegotiated in late 2009 with the aim of providing greater incentives for governments to achieve their agreed targets. Revised arrangements were introduced through a biennial Competitive Bids Process (CBP), based on the achievement of annual targets, to enable up to 25 per cent of a jurisdiction's capital works funding to be reallocated to another jurisdiction if agreed targets are not met.

2.3. Purpose and Scope of Review

COAG Agreements are to be reviewed every five years. The NPARIH is to be reviewed twice, at the mid-point and in 2017, 'with regard to progress made by the parties in respect of achieving the agreed outcomes'⁶

Consistent with that requirement, this review focuses on:

- Progress against the objectives of the NPARIH;
- Best practice and areas of success to date; and
- Challenges to achieving reforms and measuring progress over the remainder of the NPARIH, taking into account performance indicators and measures.

It considers progress with the key initiatives (outputs) agreed in the NPARIH, including capital works, property and tenancy management, maintenance and repairs, Indigenous employment, provision of employment related accommodation, securing land tenure for social housing and economic investment and enabling private home ownership opportunities.

It is not within the scope of this review of progress to undertake a financial audit of NPARIH. In the Northern Territory, where the largest proportion of NPARIH funding has been deployed, various reviews have already been conducted into the financial management of the program, including by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) as part of its 2011-12 audit program, which found the work was being delivered cost effectively within budget. Recommendations made by the Australian National Audit Office to improve performance are being implemented. The key reviews undertaken were:

- The SIHIP Review of Performance, August 2009;
- The ANAO Review of the Implementation of the NPARIH in the Northern Territory, Audit Report No. 12 2011-2012; and
- The Report of the Commonwealth Ombudsman into Remote Housing Reforms in the Northern Territory, Report 03/2012.

A Steering Group has been established to oversee the review. Membership and governance arrangements are set out in **Appendix 4**.

Consultations were undertaken with key government stakeholders and a small number of other interested parties. In addition, there was a limited schedule of visits to remote Indigenous communities to view work completed or in progress, as time and availability allowed. The review of progress has also drawn on available written material and relevant reports, including Implementation Plans and Annual Status Reports from each states and the Northern Territory.

⁶ NPARIH, Clause 35.

3. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS

3.1. Significantly Reducing Severe Overcrowding in Remote Indigenous Communities

An objective of the NPARIH is to significantly reduce severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities.

NPARIH Benchmarks are: ‘average occupancy per remote dwelling to reduce by 2018’; ‘incidence of homelessness in remote Australia reduces by 30 per cent by 2013 and 50 per cent by 2018’; and reduce the number of overcrowded dwellings/houses in remote Australia by 4200 by 2018’.

The picture of the impact to date in addressing this objective is complex.

While the latest ABS Census data is positive and shows some reduction in the proportion of Indigenous households experiencing both overcrowding and *severe* overcrowding in remote Australia, it is important to note that the 2011 Census took place ahead of the delivery of major capital works in a number of jurisdictions. The full impact of this work is not reflected in these data.

However, the following information is worth noting:

- Since commencement in 2008, NPARIH jurisdiction reporting has indicated a reduction in severe overcrowding in communities where there has been capital works investment under the NPARIH (this is supported by the examples set out below and based on 2011 ABS Census data).
- From NPARIH commencement in 2008 to August 2011 (Census month), 843 new houses and 3255 refurbishments were completed with inroads into reducing severe overcrowding being made as a result.
- Overall, ABS Census data indicates, levels of overcrowding in Indigenous households in remote Australia have reduced from 22.3 per cent in 2006 to 20.1 per cent in 2011, and from 40.5 per cent to 38.9 per cent in very remote Australia.
- Similarly, the proportion of severely overcrowded households in remote Australia has reduced from 5.1 per cent in 2006 to 3.9 per cent in 2011, and from 16.3 to 15.0 per cent in very remote Australia.
- Since the Census, the number of new houses completed has almost doubled to around 1600 and the number of refurbishments now completed is over 5200, significantly exceeding expectations and ensuring further progress in addressing severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities.
- By 2018, the NPARIH will have delivered around 4200 new houses and by the end of 2014, over 6600 refurbishments will have been completed.
- In Remote Service Delivery (RSD) communities, where significant NPARIH investment had been made ahead of the 2011 Census, ABS data shows a reduction in the proportion of Indigenous households that are overcrowded, from 57.9 per cent in 2006 to 53.3 per cent in 2011 – a decline of 4.6 percentage points overall.

- By the time of the 2011 Census, ABS data for RSD communities shows that the proportion of Indigenous households subject to severe overcrowding (i.e., requiring three or more additional bedrooms) fell from 31.3 per cent in 2006 to 24.8 per cent in 2011 – a fall of 6.4 percentage points.
- Living in a severely crowded dwelling is the most common form of homelessness⁷ amongst Indigenous Australians—representing 75% of all Indigenous homelessness according to the 2011 Census. It is the major reason Indigenous homelessness rates are 14 times higher than the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous Australians living in severely crowded dwellings make up 75 per cent of the Indigenous homelessness population.
- In remote and very remote Australia, 93.6% of homeless Indigenous people lived in a severely crowded dwelling in 2011, an increase of 1.4 percentage points between the 2006 and 2011 Census.

3.1.1. Examples of Progress (based on unpublished ABS 2011 Census data and FAHCSIA data on NPARIH capital works)

There are examples emerging from the ABS Census data of progress being made in addressing overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities where NPARIH investment has been made.

Mimili (SA)

Since 2006, the proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households has decreased by more than a third, from 65.6 per cent to 41.7 per cent.

There has also been a reduction in the severity of overcrowding. Within overcrowded Indigenous households, the proportion of those requiring three or more extra bedrooms has decreased from 52.4 per cent to 30.0 per cent.

NPARIH capital works as at August 2011 included 24 new dwellings and 26 refurbishments. Since that date, there have been four additional new houses and one underway.



⁷ ABS Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2011, cat no 2049, defines severe overcrowding as people living in a dwelling which needs four or more extra bedrooms to meet CNOS.

Beagle Bay (WA)

In 2006, more than half (56.7 per cent) of Indigenous households were overcrowded. By 2011, this had decreased to around a third (37.0 per cent).

NPARIH capital works as at August 2011 included 15 new dwellings and 47 refurbishments. Since 2011, there has been an additional 14 refurbishments.

Walgett (NSW)

The proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households has decreased by more than a quarter, from 20.5 per cent to 15.0 per cent.

NPARIH capital works as at August 2011 included nine new dwellings and 79 other refurbishments as at September 2011. Since that time, there has been an additional nine new dwellings and two refurbishments.



Wadeye (NT)

The proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households has decreased by more than a quarter, from 89.6 per cent to 64.9 per cent.

Within overcrowded Indigenous households, the proportion of those requiring three or more extra bedrooms has decreased by more than a third, from 74.6 per cent to 47.1 per cent.

NPARIH capital works as at August 2011 included 104 new dwellings and 105 refurbishments. Since that time, one new dwelling and 12 refurbishments have been completed.



Umbakumba (NT)

The proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households has decreased from 66.0 per cent in 2006 to 60.3 per cent in 2011.

Within overcrowded Indigenous households, the proportion of those requiring three or more extra bedrooms has also decreased, from 37.1 per cent to 24.4 per cent.

NPARIH capital works as at August 2011 included 12 new dwellings and 34 refurbishments. Since that time, a further six new dwellings and eight refurbishments have been completed.

3.1.2. Future Challenge

The examples above, which draw on available ABS data, demonstrate some progress in reducing overcrowding and severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities where NPARIH investment had been made prior to the Census date. In light of the additional work that has been completed in many remote communities since the Census, it seems reasonable to expect further improvement to have occurred since that time.

Nevertheless, NPARIH funding, as substantial and unprecedented as it is, will not resolve overcrowding in all remote Indigenous communities. Governments understood when they agreed to the NPARIH that while progress could be made on this issue over the life of the 10-year strategy, more work would need to be done, particularly in those jurisdictions where chronic overcrowding has existed for generations.

Relevant overcrowding data is not yet available for all communities where NPARIH builds have occurred and consideration is yet to be given to whether progress in addressing severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities is more advanced overall in some jurisdictions than in others. That is, is NPARIH funding enabling this issue to be tackled more quickly and comprehensively in some jurisdictions than in others.

The future impact of NPARIH investment is also affected by changing demographics and mobility of the Indigenous population, with the population growing in many remote communities.

However, in some jurisdictions there is movement out of remote areas. This is particularly noticeable in NSW, where despite a significant state wide increase in the Indigenous population, the Indigenous population living in remote NSW has decreased from 5.46⁸ % to 4.49 % in the intercensal period. *(Note: this analysis is based on 2011 Census count data, and numbers may change when the ABS releases official Estimated Resident Population data for remote areas in August 2013).*

Around 9 per cent of all Indigenous households in NSW were estimated to be overcrowded in 2011. Overcrowding in remote and very remote locations has also improved with the average size of Indigenous households decreasing from 3.2 persons to 2.9 people in the intercensal period⁸. For example, around 9 per cent of all Indigenous households in NSW were estimated to be overcrowded in 2011 down from 15% in 2006.

The ABS has released official Estimated Resident Population data which shows that around 208,000 Indigenous people, 31 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, lived in NSW in 2011. This estimate is higher than estimates for 2006.

Over the coming years of the NPARIH, as the remaining major capital works are delivered, governments will need to keep progress against this objective under review. There is a need for continuing collaborative policy work on the issue to determine next steps for the second half of the NPARIH and beyond 2018.

⁸ Data provided by Housing NSW

3.2. Increasing the Supply of New Houses and Improving the Condition of Existing Houses in Remote Indigenous Communities

One of the objectives of the NPARIH is to increase the number of new houses and improve the condition of existing housing in remote Indigenous communities.

The Objective incorporates the following Outputs from the NPARIH:

- *Supply of safe and adequate housing that will contribute to improved living standards for Indigenous people in remote communities (Output (a)).*
- *Construction of new houses and ongoing repair and maintenance of houses in remote communities (Output (d)).*
- *Upgraded housing and housing-related infrastructure in town camps where appropriate (Output (h)).*

NPARIH Benchmarks are: 'new housing construction of 4200 houses completed by 2018'; 'repair and replacement for existing 4876 houses completed by 2014'; all communities connected to operating water, sewerage and power by 2018; all communities with rubbish disposal by 2018; and all dwellings connected to operating water, sewerage and power by 2018'.

Clearly an essential early priority, governments have put significant effort over the first years of the NPARIH into achieving agreed commitments under this objective. Getting additional houses on the ground and bringing others up to a safe and healthy standard is fundamental to reducing severe overcrowding and ensuring housing stock is sustainable over the long term.

The work has been done against a backdrop of chronic underinvestment and largely decentralised management of housing and related municipal service infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities over generations. Prior to NPARIH, the delivery of housing tended to be poorly coordinated with the provision of municipal services such as water and sewerage. There was generally little capacity or motivation for effective town planning and land administration. Large numbers of Indigenous families had been living in overcrowded and unsafe housing for long periods of time.

There was a lack of clarity around ownership of and responsibility for existing housing stock, and very limited visibility over the condition of that stock. A high proportion of houses were located on communally held Indigenous owned land, meaning neither the government nor the housing service provider had ownership, clear responsibility for maintenance and allocations or guaranteed rights of access to the property to discharge landlord responsibilities. Severe overcrowding, irregular and inadequate repairs and maintenance programs and, frequently, a lack of understanding by tenants of their roles and responsibilities meant houses typically had short life spans of around seven years compared to 30 years normally expected in mainstream public housing systems. In some jurisdictions, the condition of existing stock was found to be far worse than anticipated as a result of poor property management practices and patchy record keeping.

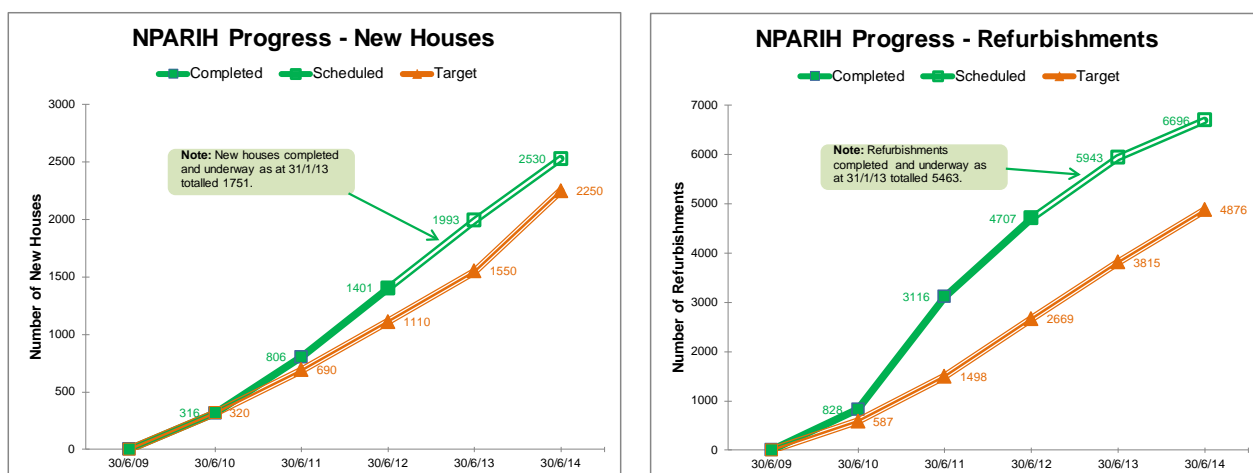
Western Australia had moved ahead of the NPARIH to establish a Community Layout Plan to guide investments in a town planning manner in remote communities, and work has continued as part of the broader State Planning Policy

Across most jurisdictions, housing authorities had to catch up, assess need and the condition of the existing stock and make decisions about how and where to target the NPARIH investment to deliver on agreed commitments. A pre-condition to NPARIH housing investment is that tenure over community-titled land must be secured through long-term (40-year) leases or equivalent statutory or other mechanisms, except in NSW, where work has occurred on existing titled land. The aim is to support the implementation of tenancy management reforms, to ensure sustainability of the housing investment and provide protection for tenants through standardised public housing like arrangements.

Housing funded under the NPARIH has to meet the requirements of the National Indigenous Housing Guide, the National Construction Code and all relevant Australian standards and construction legislation.

Governments agreed that priority for early work on new house construction would be undertaken in larger communities where other investment in infrastructure and services was being prioritised as part of COAG's Remote Service Delivery (RSD) strategy. The RSD strategy focuses on 29 remote Indigenous communities across the country and aims to improve the standard and accessibility of government services in those communities where COAG believed there was best potential for future economic development and sustainability.

Figure 4. Capital Works Targets Achieved



Governments are well on track to deliver on the NPARIH capital works targets. By 30 June 2012, 1401 new houses had been delivered, against the new house target of 4200 by 2018.

Against a refurbishment target of 4876 by 2014, a total of 4707 refurbishments had been delivered by 30 June 2012. Since this time, over 5200 refurbishments have been completed. A new refurbishment target of 6696 is now scheduled for 2014, exceeding the original NPARIH target by over 1800.

The refurbishment targets have been exceeded two years ahead of schedule as a result of some jurisdictions delivering more refurbishments than their original targets and others delivering at a quicker pace than expected. **Appendix 5** provides a list of communities

across Australia where NPARIH housing, new builds and/or refurbishments had been completed to 31 December 2012.

The fast paced refurbishment work has meant some jurisdictions have already completed their full NPARIH refurbishment program and their remaining capital works funding is for new builds only. This raises a previously unforeseen challenge in that the NPARIH does not allow for jurisdictions to refurbish further houses in remote communities. This is an issue that warrants further thinking as part of the future challenge of maintaining the pace of improvement in remote housing.

Figure 5. Fregon, South Australia



Figure 6. Napranum, Queensland



3.2.1. Lessons Learned

As work has progressed, lessons have been learnt. Implementation started slowly. This was expected in the first year of implementation, given the lead time required to plan and prepare for delivery of construction works. However, some particular factors have had a significant impact on increasing momentum since then.

Biennial Competitive Bids Process

The early introduction of a competitive bids process, following the renegotiation of the NPARIH in late 2009, provided added incentive to meet agreed targets. The process allows for up to 25 per cent per year of a jurisdiction's capital works funding to be reallocated if agreed targets are not met.

Through the competitive bids process, jurisdictions have the capacity to bid for new house or refurbishment targets above the targets originally set under the NPARIH. The result has been some jurisdictions, such as Western Australia, have achieved better size and scale, doing more sooner and creating efficiencies within their program that have enabled them to achieve additional outcomes under the NPARIH, for example, infrastructure directly related to housing. There has also been willingness and commitment by jurisdictions such as New South Wales, Northern Territory and Tasmania to deliver more refurbishments than original targets required. Some jurisdictions are delivering at a quicker pace than expected, for example South Australia and Western Australia, which have consistently met or exceeded housing targets with efficiencies gained in the early delivery of NPARIH, through an accelerated construction program.

All states, other than Queensland and South Australia, achieved their agreed capital works targets in 2009-10. In the next year, 2010-11, around \$4 million was reallocated from the two states to Western Australia, which had exceeded its targets. The Northern Territory had previously agreed to an accelerated works program, and was not included in the competitive bids process for 2010-12, as specific packages of work and targets had already been allocated to the Alliances (construction consortia) responsible for delivering capital works in Northern Territory communities.

Collaborative Effort

Those involved in implementing this program overwhelmingly see it as a valuable opportunity and a positive step in supporting Indigenous people in remote communities to improve their families' wellbeing. However, they agree there are many challenges and risks associated with program delivery, from initial planning and construction to ongoing management of property and tenancy management. The unusually long term nature of the 10 year NPARIH funding strategy and the unprecedented scale of the works commitment requires a preparedness by all involved to work together collaboratively and flexibly to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for Indigenous people.

In view of this, governments and their respective officials have adopted highly collaborative arrangements through the joint governance groups established under the NPARIH, which should be maintained over the long haul to ensure work stays on track. Those responsible for implementing the NPARIH credit the 'bipartisan' collaboration with breaking down barriers, enabling innovative and flexible solutions to difficult issues and the capacity to

share information and lessons learned across jurisdictions. Continuation of the collaborative approach, particularly where program performance might at times need to be reshaped around unexpected obstacles, will be critical for maintaining momentum and enthusiasm for the task ahead.

At the time of drafting this report, discussions were underway through the governance arrangements about streamlining approval processes, particularly to ensure delivery can be effectively aligned with the optimum construction period in northern Australia.

Scrutiny of the Program

The program has been under intense scrutiny from the start, mainly in the Northern Territory. Scrutiny has focussed on the high level of remote housing need in the Northern Territory, the substantial financial investment there by government, the use of large construction companies in Alliance consortia and the Alliance methodology and cost. There has also been focus on the quality of some of the refurbishment work done under the program in the Northern Territory.

Ongoing interest has been intense from the media and various parliamentary committees, both Commonwealth and Northern Territory, and several reviews have been conducted into aspects of the program. None of the reviews to date have found major issues with delivery of the program in the Northern Territory, and any recommendations for improvement made as a result of those reviews have been or are being implemented.

Responding to this level of scrutiny has at times been highly resource-intensive for the housing authorities and others involved. However, it has also provided valuable lessons and additional incentive to all jurisdictions to continuously strive to lift performance.

Figure 7. Flinders Island, Tasmania



3.2.2. Implementation Approaches

All jurisdictions must ensure Australian housing design and construction methods are met for NPARIH funded work, and the costs of programs are within the overall funding budget and are value for money. The competitive bids process establishes agreed costs. Within these parameters, jurisdictions are able to develop and use different methods of design, construction material and delivery to meet local conditions and practices. Some examples of the different implementation approaches are highlighted below.

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory, a decision had been made in mid-2007, prior to the NPARIH, to establish a large-scale remote Indigenous housing program, SIHIP, to more effectively address the significant need in Northern Territory remote communities. Until then, the relatively small scale of investment had been unable to keep pace with need or achieve economies of scale.

Governments agreed to a new mode of delivery, using a Strategic Alliance model. The model involves a panel of Alliance partners with a government agency, in this case the Northern Territory Housing Department, as the 'owner participant' and several private sector companies as 'non-owner' or service provider participants. Among other things, this model enabled a collective sharing of project risks, integrated decision making and oversight of the work. It also incorporated extensive community engagement regarding design, location of houses and Indigenous employment opportunities that had not been possible under the generally single contract delivery model of past years.

The NPARIH increased the remote housing investment in the Northern Territory and subsumed SIHIP within that investment. The commitment to the Alliance model, then in the early stages of planning and implementation was continued. The Alliance model was considered the most likely to be able to deliver the large scale investment across so many communities, in parallel, that would be required in the first years of the NPARIH.

This has resulted in around five times as many houses being constructed and refurbished during the first half of the NPARIH than in a similar timeframe in previous years.

Western Australia

Western Australia introduced an Early Builder Involvement (EBI) system to help ensure rapid delivery of NPARIH housing. The EBI is an engaging and contracting process that establishes collaboration with builders to achieve efficiencies in time, cost and quality of construction, as well as a collaborative approach to design solutions. The EBI arrangements have been particularly relevant to refurbishments, which can be difficult to manage through standard tender processes.

The system has enabled continuity of work for builders and employment of Indigenous people. The system was used to deliver Western Australia's timely response to the Warmun flood in 2011, when 17 new houses and eight refurbishments were delivered within 10 weeks of the flood⁹.

Using this model, Western Australia has exceeded its construction targets over a number of years, receiving a \$4.2 million performance bonus in 2010-11.

⁹ from WA submission to Professional Excellence in housing Awards 2012

Figure 8. Mardiwah Loop, Western Australia



New South Wales

NPARIH capital works has commenced in western NSW, in Walgett and Wilcannia. It became clear from early on that NSW had an opportunity to meet its targets, through acquisition as well as construction of new houses, because of the significant number of suitable vacant residential properties in these locations.

This meant NSW was able to move quickly to add to social housing stock in remote, primarily Indigenous locations, and at the same time, to put additional effort into increasing and exceeding its refurbishment target for the first half of the NPARIH in remote locations in western NSW.

3.2.3. Particular Issues Related to Refurbishments in the Northern Territory

Following assessment of existing housing stock prior to works commencing, it became clear the magnitude of the task in many Northern Territory communities was far greater than had been anticipated. Information about the condition of the stock was not always reliable, and much of the stock had deteriorated badly over the years. Significantly, more houses than expected had to be rebuilt or replaced, impacting on the capacity to increase overall numbers of dwellings quickly.

Original NPARIH or SIHIP targets for the Northern Territory to June 2013 were: 750 new houses, 230 rebuilds and 2500 refurbishments. Governments were faced with a difficult decision about how best to proceed within the available budget. As a result the overall scope of works was amended to increase the number of rebuilds and accelerate the pace of new house construction. Targets were increased to: 934 new houses and 415 rebuilds by June 2013. To allow work to proceed more quickly, the Commonwealth Government agreed to bring forward an amount of \$316.7 million from future NPARIH funding.

Refurbishment of houses that were structurally sound was brought into line with overall budget targets and aimed at ensuring a house was brought up to a safe, healthy and secure standard. This could involve a range of work to improve the amenity of the dwelling, from basic electrical and plumbing repairs to tiling and new kitchen and bathrooms facilities.

There was generally little scope for non-essential work such as painting. Some tenants in the repaired houses that were not able to be painted expressed disappointment with the finished refurbishment.

In the 2012-13 Budget, the Commonwealth agreed to make \$230 million available for additional housing work from the Budget for Stronger Futures activities in the Northern Territory. This was specifically for work in smaller communities, many in the centre and south of the territory. It will enable more comprehensive refurbishments in those communities, including essential safe, healthy and secure repairs and painting. There will also be further work undertaken to replace existing dwellings considered beyond economic repair.

Note: Western Australia faced some similar issues to the Northern Territory, in that a significant proportion of NPARIH new houses were replacements of existing stock, rather than additions. This was due to the poor condition of existing stock, which had previously not been well known.

3.2.4. Housing Related Infrastructure and Municipal and Essential Services

Upgrading housing related community infrastructure and municipal and essential services has been an important part of the NPARIH capital works program. As new homes are built or additional bedrooms are added to existing houses, there can be a consequent increased load on local infrastructure such as sewerage and power. Upgrading infrastructure is a key enabler for the effective delivery of safe homes in remote Indigenous communities. While the NPARIH funding model included an amount of funding for 'within the gate infrastructure' such as site preparation, it did not include funding for replacement of major community head works infrastructure.

Under the NPARIH, a National Audit of Municipal and Essential Services was undertaken during 2009-10 to assess the levels of outstanding need for infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities. The National Audit involved site visits to 86 remote Indigenous communities and 14 non-Indigenous communities of comparable size and location. It also started the process of clarifying the roles and responsibilities with respect to municipal services and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and essential services in remote areas.

The National Audit confirmed that the level of infrastructure and essential services in remote Indigenous communities does not meet the standard generally available in non-Indigenous communities of a similar size and location, and that services are consistently unreliable and suffer major disruptions.

The National Audit found differences in existing standards across communities and towns where NPARIH housing is being delivered. Where these locations have access to normalised service arrangements, they generally tend to have a higher standard of provision and maintenance of municipal and essential services. Frequently, this means the provision of power is the most reliable and highest performing service, as it is often delivered by a mainstream power provider. The National Audit found services such as water, waste and environmental health more generally perform less well.

Funding made available under NPARIH has resulted in significant upgrading of infrastructure and essential services in a number of locations. Where new housing subdivisions have been developed, necessary support infrastructure and services have been put in place. In larger RSD communities, this has involved major upgrades such as water storage facilities, sewer ponds, underground pipes and roads to ensure additional housing and refurbished housing is appropriately supported. **Appendix 6** provides examples of capital infrastructure developed or replaced in the Northern Territory remote communities of Maningrida and Wadeye under NPARIH. The Northern Territory Government contributed \$140 million to support infrastructure upgrades in remote communities across the territory.

Nevertheless, significant need remains for reliable infrastructure and essential services in many communities to ensure public health and safety standards are maintained, and to support additional housing in the future. The infrastructure gap will grow without further investment in capital works for asset replacement and upgrades.

This is a critical issue for governments as work progresses into the second half of the NPARIH. Already, in some locations, infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities is at capacity. Where additional housing investment is scheduled, particularly where new subdivisions or upgraded infrastructure might be required to support new housing, governments need to agree on a strategy so delivery of housing can proceed where it is most needed.

While the National Audit notes that infrastructure issues will not be resolved through additional financial investment alone, the NPARIH itself requires roles, responsibilities and funding to be clarified ‘with respect to municipal services and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure and essential services in remote areas’¹⁰. The NPARIH deadline for a report back to COAG on this issue by the end of 2009 was not achieved. However, work has been underway between governments for some time with a report to COAG due in 2013.

The National Audit also identifies a number of broader systemic capacity constraints which are important. It identifies areas of focus for state, regional or local government planning processes that require a shift away from the current, mainly reactive approach to funding, including the development of:

- asset management plans for all infrastructure;
- demand management strategies for water, power and sewerage consumption; and
- workforce planning strategies with a focus on local employment.

¹⁰ NPARIH p 6, Section 17 (a)

3.2.5. Upgraded Housing-Related Infrastructure in Town Camps

Alice Springs Transformation Plan

In 2009, work commenced to improve housing, infrastructure and services for Indigenous people in Alice Springs. Known as the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP), it aims to integrate the town camps into the wider Alice Springs town so the town camp residents can have similar social and economic obligations and opportunities to other residents of the town. Funding of over \$150 million has enabled upgrading of housing and related services and infrastructure, construction of short-term accommodation facilities for visitors from remote communities and a range of improved social support services.

The town camps were included in the overall scope of works for the NPARIH, with work undertaken through one of the Alliance consortia and Tangentyere Council. A total of 86 new houses have been constructed and 196 rebuilds and refurbishments of houses in poor condition completed to help reduce severe overcrowding in the town camps. Improved services include street names, wheelie bins and proper collection of rubbish, fences and a postal service to the upgraded town camps. Housing related infrastructure work has included upgraded roads and drainage systems in the town camps.

Upgraded housing in the town camps is subject to the same property and tenancy management reforms as all NPARIH-funded housing.

The Northern Territory Government introduced Public Housing Safety Officers to improve the management and safety of public housing more broadly in Alice Springs, including in the town camps. The Public Housing Safety Officers work with tenants and visitors to target antisocial behaviour and support the work of Territory Housing.

Parallel to NPARIH work, a total of \$25.1 million, including \$13.4 million from the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan*, provided funding through the ASTP for the construction or upgrade of managed accommodation facilities such as:

- The 150-bed Ampere Mwerre Visitor Park (opened 2 February 2011).
- The Salvation Army Hostel (opened 11 February 2011).
- The Aherlkeme Village 28-unit transitional accommodation facility (opened 7 June 2011).
- The Alyerre Hostel 35-room, short-term accommodation facility for people visiting Alice Springs for medical treatment (opened 2 September 2011).

With the new houses being built on the town camps, these facilities provide more than 500 additional beds in Alice Springs to alleviate overcrowding and address homelessness.

Work is ongoing through funding under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory budget.

In Truckies Camp, the review heard the upgrades had made a difference to the lives of the Indigenous families living there. In discussion with two local residents, the review was told overcrowding had been reduced in the camp and the majority of kids were now going to school every day and playing more sport. It had not all been smooth sailing – there were some design issues with in a number of houses, examples of delays with repairs and the need to address visitor issues in some houses. Overall, the residents reported the improvement in family well-being, and pride in home and community, was significant.

Tennant Creek Community Living Areas

In Tennant Creek, Community Living Areas close to town have also been upgraded, with 70 houses rebuilt.

3.3. Ensuring that Rental Houses are Well Maintained and Managed in Remote Communities

A fundamental objective of the NPARIH is that new and refurbished houses will be effectively managed to public housing standards, and that progressively all housing in remote communities, including existing stock, will be managed as part of the one system. This is a huge task.

The Objective incorporates the following Outputs from the NPARIH:

- *Robust and standardised tenancy management of all remote Indigenous housing that ensures rent collection, asset management and governance arrangements consistent with public housing standards (Output (b)).*
- *A program of ongoing maintenance and repairs that progressively increases the lifecycle of remote Indigenous housing from 7 years to a public housing-like lifecycle of up to 30 years (Output (c)).*

NPARIH Benchmarks are: 'tenancy management, rent collection and tenancy support services in place for all existing 'replaced and repaired' houses in remote Indigenous communities by 2015'; 'all prospective tenants of new houses to be offered Living Skills support training as part of tenancy management'; 'comprehensive rolling program of repairs and maintenance for all houses in remote Indigenous communities by 2010 as per jurisdictional Implementation Plans – current dwelling property condition data to inform rolling program – repaired and replaced houses and new houses to be incorporated into the rolling program as they come 'on-line'.'

Governments agreed the key to sustainability of the NPARIH capital works effort and investment was to establish property and tenancy management arrangements that matched public housing standards and practices elsewhere within their jurisdictions, and that they comply with the relevant residential tenancy act standards. This includes the issuing of formal tenancy agreements between a state, or the Northern Territory, housing authority and a tenant. A necessary pre-condition for governments is to secure tenure over the land where housing investment is made.

This is a significant change from past practice, where the administration of housing in remote Indigenous communities was generally highly decentralised and provided on an ad hoc basis through informal agreements. It was not underpinned by a standardised regulatory system, or security of tenure over the land that could protect assets and tenants. There was little consistency or fairness in the allocation of houses within communities and wait list policies, if they existed, were often disregarded. Community housing providers tended to have poor capacity, which resulted in poor performance and financial viability. A lack of clarity around ownership and responsibility for repairs and maintenance of housing contributed to the relatively short life span of houses, which typically lasted around seven years, in contrast to around 30 years in mainstream public housing.

The property and tenancy management reforms being pursued under the NPARIH aim to ensure:

- Consistent and fair housing allocation and wait-list policies are implemented.

- Tenancy agreements are in place where properties meet relevant residential tenancy act requirements.
- Rent is set at a fair level and rent arrears are minimised.
- A robust repairs and maintenance program is in place to support longer asset life.
- Tenants are supported to understand and meet their new rights and responsibilities.

As noted above, there are two key property and tenancy management benchmarks in the NPARIH which require governments to have in place:

- Comprehensive rolling programs of repairs and maintenance for all community houses by 2010, with refurbished and new houses incorporated into the rolling program as they are completed.
- Tenancy management, rent collection and tenancy support services in place for all existing and 'repaired and replaced' houses in remote Indigenous communities by 2015. All prospective tenants of new houses to be offered Living Skills support training as part of tenancy management.

Considerable effort is being focussed on meeting these benchmarks and indications are that governments are generally on track to do this. It is a massive undertaking coming from a low base in most jurisdictions, where the management of remote Indigenous housing stock has not been subject to the reforms that have taken place across mainstream public housing over many years, and has not generally met the standards and practices expected in the broader community housing sector. The requirement for management of all existing community houses (legacy stock) to also meet the benchmarks is particularly challenging.

Tasmania, as a small jurisdiction, has not faced the same level of challenge as some other jurisdictions. It has been possible, through close collaboration with the ICHOs, to achieve the property and tenancy management reforms including rent setting and arrears management. Tasmania has also developed a manual on standards for governance and management of Aboriginal housing.

In each jurisdiction, new property and tenancy management arrangements are being implemented as land tenure and leasing is settled and construction progresses. The full suite of property and tenancy management reforms can only be put in place where housing stock meets relevant residential tenancy act requirements. Legacy stock would not meet this standard.

Through the implementation of its Housing Improvement Program, the Queensland Government already had robust data on the condition of social housing and housing need in Indigenous communities prior to the NPARIH. Significant progress had been made, through the One Social Housing System, to align the property and tenancy management of social housing in remote Indigenous communities with that of broader state housing policies and procedures.

A number of jurisdictions now have robust data systems in place to monitor repairs and maintenance and house inspections. Ideally, all the important elements of a comprehensive property and tenancy management regime would be in place and ready to go before tenants move into new or refurbished houses. Despite huge effort and considerable progress, implementation in this area has not kept pace across the board with the roll-out of capital

works. While there is generally good coverage of new and refurbished stock, in those locations where there is a significant proportion of legacy stock, application of the reforms has tended to lag.

There are a number of factors which impact on progress, including:

- The cost of putting in place the comprehensive reforms, particularly in small very remote communities with poor economies of scale, limited prospects for future economic development and where there is a comparatively large amount of legacy stock involved.
- A significant component of the housing stock has not yet been touched by capital works in some jurisdictions, resulting in high repairs and maintenance costs;
- The difficulty for tenants, particularly those with limited literacy and numeracy, in fully understanding some of the new requirements, e.g. income-based rent assessment processes.
- The difficulty for tenancy management staff in keeping pace with an often highly mobile tenant base with consequent fluctuating household rents, and the resource intensive nature of the work required to record changes in relevant data systems;
- The issues associated with sometimes severe over-crowding and the broader social issues often present in remote communities, and the wear and tear this inflicts on a house.
- Workforce development issues, including a lack of staff housing, where the tenancy management reforms have created job opportunities for local people but there are ongoing difficulties recruiting, training, supporting and retaining local people in the available jobs.

Ensuring long-term financial sustainability is also challenging in an environment where, unlike mainstream public housing arrangements, it is not generally possible for governments to divest land and buildings to the open market for public housing re-development. A number of governments have identified this as an area where further policy effort is required, particularly around land and economic development reforms.

Appendix 7 provides a summary of the key elements of each jurisdiction's property and tenancy management arrangements.

3.3.1. Tenant Support

A key element of tenancy management, which has lagged behind other work, is the provision of tenant support services and Living Skills training, although progress varies across jurisdictions.

Tenant support services are an integral part of effective tenancy management. In remote Indigenous communities, particularly where English is not a first language or there is low literacy and numeracy, this is even more important. Where there has been a large-scale and relatively sudden investment in new and upgraded housing, it is essential tenants understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to care and maintenance of their houses. Under the NPARIH, housing authorities are required to put in place rigorous inspection programs, but sustainability is also dependent on tenants taking responsibility for caring for their houses and notifying the relevant authority about any problems that arise in

between inspections. Often this is a huge change for tenants from past requirements, and tenant support services or Life Skills programs need to take account of this and help tenants successfully manage the transition.

Most jurisdictions have some form of tenancy support service in place, and others are currently developing programs. Those jurisdictions that have an upfront tenancy support program in place to coincide with a tenant moving into new accommodation recognise that, to have lasting effect, a tenant support program cannot be a one-off experience and needs to be ongoing. This is both resource-intensive and costly in remote locations.

Some jurisdictions have trained local Indigenous people to deliver the services, which can reduce costs, but retention of people in those jobs is often challenging. Having local people in the jobs can make tenants feel more comfortable discussing their tenant responsibilities and rights, however it can also expose those delivering the service to difficult pressure from family members who are tenants. Some jurisdictions are considering ways to involve non-government organisations (NGOs) already working in a community in delivering some of the tenancy support services and/or assisting local people who are interested in doing these jobs to stay in the jobs for longer. In other jurisdictions, for example Western Australia, NGOs are already engaged to provide these services.

In NSW the Aboriginal Housing Office is participating in the Wilcannia Literacy Program run by the University of New England and is providing encouraging results.

As the reforms continue to roll out, the key focus for governments must be on providing the best possible service to tenants. Within that context, it is expected, as the reforms are fully implemented over the next few years, that more local people should be able to take up opportunities for employment in the growing pool of tenancy management and tenancy support jobs in remote Indigenous communities. This can be viewed as a broader reform challenge on two fronts. Firstly, as a sectoral development challenge where the aim should be for local Indigenous employees to receive the same quality of training, support and professional development as their counterparts in similar mainstream public housing jobs. Secondly, it is both a key challenge, and an opportunity for employment service agencies funded by government to improve overall Indigenous employment outcomes in remote Indigenous communities.

The Northern Territory, which introduced an Indigenous employment target of 40 per cent for property management, and 50 per cent for tenancy management has consistently exceeded these targets.

The Northern Territory, which introduced an Indigenous employment target of 40 per cent for property management, and 50 per cent for tenancy management has consistently exceeded these targets.

Appendix 8 provides a selection of tenant support material developed by different jurisdictions, for example:

- *South Australia* has developed tenant support material that it has delivered through local people.

- *NSW* has developed a Healthy, Happy Homes Kit for tenants.
- *Northern Territory* has in place an Intensive Tenant Support Program for use by Housing Department staff in supporting new tenants.
- *Western Australia* has developed a tenancy support tool called My Home My Tenancy.

3.3.2. Reformed Rent

Generally, rent reforms involving fair rent setting and regular collection of the new rent, have been more timely, although again progress varies across jurisdictions, as does methodology.

Ahead of the NPARIH, the Queensland Government had moved, to increase rent levels in remote Indigenous communities to match arrangements under its broader One Social Housing System as it built new houses and refurbished existing houses. Rent was increased from an average of \$60 a week per household to 25 per cent of total household income. It has continued this practice with NPARIH funded housing. Similarly, tenants in the Northern Territory have been required to pay the new rent levels as soon as they move into upgraded or new housing.

There are examples where tenants have moved into their new or refurbished housing and are still paying pre-reform, low levels of rent. Where this is occurring useful leverage is lost in terms of residents understanding and accepting that higher rent levels come with upgraded housing. Tenancy managers are finding the longer the tenants are living in new housing without paying appropriate rent, the harder it is to implement the new rent arrangements, which in turn reduces the level of funding available for ongoing repairs and maintenance. This has the potential to impact on program sustainability, when rent does not adequately contribute to the cost of property and tenancy management.

Rent Setting

The NPARIH requires rent to be set consistent with public housing arrangements. This generally means that rent is set at a proportion of assessable income for a household. In the case of the Northern Territory, this applies to all tenants in a house who have signed the tenancy agreement. In remote communities, this can be a complex and costly system to administer and difficult for tenants to fully understand. There can also be additional costs associated with changes to household income-based rent arrangements where household composition frequently changes as a result of tenant mobility.

Almost all jurisdictions have raised the need to review these arrangements and implement a simpler, less costly system. Rent reforms in NSW use a robust, relatively straightforward dwelling based system that is less complex to administer, and NSW intends to keep using this model for at least another 12 months.

There is an opportunity for governments to keep both systems under review over the next year and to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement.

3.3.3. Structural Issues - Service Delivery

Across jurisdictions, property and tenancy management is implemented through different service delivery models. This tends to be either through direct delivery by government housing authorities, the use of a service provider network or a mix of both models.

Establishing a quality service provider network in remote locations can be challenging. There is often a lack of competition, with proven and experienced providers who operate in urban or major regional locations shying away from the remote work because of cost, distance and other factors that can make achieving agreed outcomes more difficult. At times, the organisations responsible for delivery of property and tenancy management are also delivering a range of other services, which can dilute their focus on social housing reforms. Nevertheless, across many areas of public policy, governments need to engage external service providers to enable better coverage in remote locations where the costs of direct government delivery can be prohibitive.

If the housing reforms in remote Indigenous communities are to be sustainable, the use of external service providers may need to grow. Effort will be needed both to attract experienced community housing providers and to invest in all involved organisations to ensure they have the capacity to operate to similar standards required of community housing organisations in mainstream public housing systems. The risk in not doing this is that organisations with poor capacity, poor performance and an uncertain financial position continue to deliver a below standard service, impacting on both Indigenous tenants and the remote housing system as a whole.

Using the opportunities provided by NPARIH funding, and leveraging off the increased funding available for capital works, the New South Wales Government has moved to reform and strengthen its network of Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) which delivers property and tenancy management services to remote Indigenous dwellings as well as in regional and urban areas.

Under the Build and Grow Community Housing Strategy, implemented by the Aboriginal Housing Office, the ACHPs are being given the opportunity and support to operate to the standards of the mainstream public housing system. ACHPs are not required to become part of the mainstream public housing system. However, they do need to operate to similar standards of performance and financial viability. They are supported to become registered, accredited providers under the Provider Assessment and Registration System (PARS).

NSW has recently launched 'Capacity Building and Business Development' to assist ACHPs to achieve sustainability, develop skills such as financial and contract management, governance, reporting and monitoring, and to assist service providers to put in place plans and budgeting that to support future viability.

The Build and Grow Strategy is set out in more detail in Section 3.4.5 covering Indigenous Community Housing Organisation Reform later in the report.

As part of the strategy, the NSW Government is ensuring ACHPs are supported and prepared in the same way as mainstream community housing organisations to meet the standards of the new National Regulatory System for Community Housing, due to be implemented in July 2013. The new system will be based on comprehensive, nationally consistent legislation to support growth in the community housing sector, and set minimum rules, requirements and powers to manage risks to investors, tenants and states and the Northern Territory.

Western Australia, through the SHPI project has transferred mainstream like social housing practice to five regional providers, undertaken extensive training, and established quality assurance mechanisms and ongoing training and support to assist them. This is underpinned by rigorous Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included in contracts. An internet based social housing practice website has also been set up to support on line reference, learning and updates to policy and procedures.

In addition, the National Community Housing Standards Manual, updated in 2010, sets out standards of good practice in service delivery for the community housing sector in areas such as financial planning, asset management and business planning. It provides clear and comprehensive guidance on common national standards and assessment and accreditation of community housing providers on the basis of the standards.

If the property and tenancy management objective of the NPARIH reforms is to be achieved, it is important service providers delivering in remote Indigenous communities have the capacity to operate to the standards set out in the manual and, within a reasonable timeframe, to meet the standards of the new regulatory system.

3.3.4. Improving Performance Benchmarks

Existing performance benchmarks in the NPARIH provide only limited visibility of progress on property and tenancy management reforms, and do not enable effective assessment of performance where different service delivery arrangements are implemented across jurisdictions, i.e. direct delivery by government or delivery through a service provider network, such as the ACHPs in NSW. As a result, they do not drive performance effectively.

To drive the reforms forward, it is essential to have an accurate understanding of trends, impacts and service standards of each key element of a property and tenancy management system over time. This will become more important over the remaining years of the NPARIH to ensure the 2015 benchmark is met.

As the focus shifts from capital works targets to sustainability of the property and tenancy management system, protecting the massive investment of funding and maintaining the quality of the work done, it will be critical to understand what works well and where changes, further development or refinement of systems might be required.

Equally, an understanding of the impact on tenants of the various strategies will be important. A small number of examples are emerging of family pride in moving from an overcrowded home in poor condition into a new home, buying new furniture and whitegoods and starting a garden, particularly in some locations where clusters or subdivisions of new houses have been built. It will be important to track how a rigorous and supportive tenancy management regime can influence and help tenants in remote communities retain and build on this pride.

In discussions in Napranum near Weipa in Cape York, the review heard there was a noticeable link between the upgrades to residents' houses and an increase in pride and care for the properties.

Understanding this will also be important to assessment over time of any broader impacts of new housing on family wellbeing, particularly in relation to the Closing the Gap targets.

In Galiwinku in Arnhem Land during the review visit, the emerging pride in the new houses in the new subdivision, built through the NPARIH, was evident in the number of gardens being cultivated by families who are now in those houses. Similarly, in Wadeye, growing gardens were visible around new houses and local people advised that gardening competitions had been held since residents moved into their new houses.

It is also important to better understand the pressures jurisdictions are facing in meeting the benchmark requirements for all existing housing stock in remote communities to be covered by the property and tenancy management reforms. This is particularly the case where, without further investment, it might not be possible to bring all houses up to residential tenancy act standards.

Most jurisdictions have agreed to report against property and tenancy management dashboards, which is improving visibility of progress over time. There is also an opportunity for jurisdictions to jointly review and further develop the existing benchmarks for these critical reforms when Implementation Plans are renegotiated later this year, with regard to standards of property and tenancy management, rent collection, repairs and maintenance and tenancy support.

3.3.5. Sharing Information

Reformed property and tenancy management in remote Indigenous communities is one of the most challenging of the NPARIH objectives. Cross-jurisdiction governance mechanisms, such as Joint Steering Committees, are being used to help improve performance through sharing information on lessons learned and emerging issues. Two national continuous improvement practitioners' workshops have recently been held.

These are positive initiatives that should assist in keeping governments on track to meet the 2015 target. There are also lessons to be learned for all jurisdictions from the recommendations of the June 2012 Report from the Commonwealth Ombudsman into the Remote Housing Reforms in the Northern Territory¹¹.

¹¹ Report from the Commonwealth Ombudsman into the Remote Housing Reforms in the Northern Territory

3.4. Progress in Implementing Other Outputs of the Agreement

3.4.1 Employment and Workforce Development

Output (e): increased employment opportunities for local residents in remote Indigenous communities.

NPARIH Benchmark is '20 per cent local employment to be included as part of procurement requirement for new housing construction'.

The NPARIH housing investment is providing significant opportunities for local Indigenous employment and enterprise development in a planned and required way, which has not been possible through past remote Indigenous housing programs.

Leveraging off that investment, initially in capital works, and then through ongoing repairs and maintenance funding, governments have ensured local Indigenous people have been able to take up training and employment opportunities. Where necessary, government procurement arrangements have been revised to require Indigenous employment outcomes as part of a contract.

Figure 9. Home fixtures, Northern Territory



The NPARIH requires 20 per cent local Indigenous employment during construction over the life of NPARIH. This benchmark has been consistently achieved and often exceeded, although there has been criticism that some of the jobs have been taken up by Indigenous people from outside the local community where the works are proceeding. The Commonwealth Ombudsman noted this in the June 2012 report on Remote Housing Reforms in the Northern Territory and subsequently Commonwealth and Northern Territory housing agencies agreed to clarify the definition for the purposes of the NPARIH benchmark.

In addition to the NPARIH targets, WA Housing has now introduced, on a trial basis, a 20 per cent minimum Indigenous employment target for its mainstream housing contracts in the Kimberley.

NPARIH Indigenous Employment Achievements in 2011-12

Jurisdictions reported the following Indigenous employment outcomes for NPARIH construction in 2011-12:

- Northern Territory – 29 per cent;
- New South Wales – 29 per cent;
- Queensland – 53 per cent;
- Western Australia – 34 per cent; and
- South Australia – 36 per cent.

Note: Tasmania completed its 2011-12 capital works in 2010-11 and reported a 22 per cent Indigenous employment outcome during construction.

Figure 10. Gunbalanya, Northern Territory



In the Northern Territory, Alliance partners typically sought interest from local people in the available jobs, and started to work with potential Indigenous employees and local employment service providers during the community engagement phase leading up to commencement of construction. This generally worked well in that Indigenous employees could meet future mentors and trainers and start preparations for the work ahead.

Figure 11. Pouring a slab, Northern Territory



Both the Territory Alliance and the New Future Alliance put in place well-developed strategies for engaging and retaining local people. The alliances also provided support and worked in partnership with local Indigenous run enterprises involved in the construction processes in a number of NT communities.

WA Housing advised the review that Aboriginal businesses in their own right or in partnership or joint venture account for nearly 23 per cent of the total value of NPARIH expenditure to date in Western Australia.

In Queensland, there have been successes with the establishment of local construction enterprises or work teams in communities, leveraging off the NPARIH capital works investment. For example, the review was advised, the NPARIH investment has supported Hope Vale Council's 'building the workforce' model as it has enabled the apprentices to complete their apprenticeships within their own community by engaging on all the NPARIH capital works projects undertaken by the Council.

Hope Vale Workforce Model (information provided by FAHCSIA, Queensland)

The Hope Vale Council workforce model was an initiative of the Council to support current and future Hope Vale employees in all areas of Council service responsibilities. The model encourages up-skilling opportunities for staff to improve individual work performances. Trade qualified Indigenous workers in the building team, can become sub-contractors to Hope Vale Council and each is assigned an apprentice to supervise and mentor.

The NPARIH investment has supported the workforce model, enabling the apprentices to complete their apprenticeships within their own community by being engaged on the NPARIH capital works projects undertaken by the Hope Vale Council. Apprentices hosted by Hope Vale Council, and employed by Skill360, have been engaged in construction trade areas to support the new construction, upgrades and maintenance projects under NPARIH including painting, carpentry, cabinetmaking and plumbing. The team consists of five apprentice carpenters, two apprentice cabinetmakers, two apprentice painters and two apprentice plumbers.

The NPARIH has enabled a long-term program to allow for completion of apprenticeships. However, issues around work continuity have emerged as a key to developing a local Indigenous skilled workforce.

In the course of the review, other communities in Queensland identified plans to establish similar teams of local workers, advising that one option was to share the ongoing work across several communities located in reasonably close proximity. This would aim to avoid each individual community setting up its own enterprise and then competing with each other for available work in a limited market. It should ensure better economies of scale and that the local enterprise, once established, has a greater chance of sustainability.

In Aurukun in western Cape York, mining opportunities already exist at Weipa, with the possibility of another mine opening in the near future. The review heard about plans to use the work opportunities that will flow through NPARIH housing construction over the next couple of years as a critical step up to ongoing employment in the mines. The review was advised that a recent advertisement for four apprentices – two carpenters, a plumber and an electrician resulted in eighteen applications from local people.

Similarly, in Napranum, adjacent to Weipa, the review heard three apprentices are now in their third year of training off the back of the housing investment, with plans for more in the pipeline.

In South Australia in 2010-11, an employment and workforce development model was implemented in partnership between Housing South Australia and Australian Government Departments of FaHCSIA and DEEWR¹². The model has been developed based on 'working and learning' in an industry setting. A Certificate II in Civil Construction is achieved through training and building supervision onsite. This resulted in 20 Anangu people being presented with a national qualification in Civil Construction in 2011. The model has continued to be developed with a focus on transition to ongoing employment opportunities.

¹² Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

In Warmun in Western Australia the review heard about plans to use the labour hire team that currently contracts for work with Argyle mine to undertake ongoing repairs and maintenance work on the upgraded NPARIH housing in the community.

Bunuba Inc, a group of local Traditional Land Owners, set up a joint venture with ECO Construction from Broome to form Muway Constructions Pty Ltd and undertake NPARIH work in the Fitzroy Valley.

Fitzroy Framing Factory, Fitzroy Valley Labour Hire and Hale Contracting set up a business partnership with WA Housing's local EBI contractor, Pindan, and local Indigenous people to provide labour hire services for NPARIH work.

The Ongoing Employment Challenge

All jurisdictions are on track to continue to meet the NPARIH benchmark of 20 per cent local Indigenous employment during construction.

The challenge for the remaining years of the NPARIH, as the focus shifts from capital works to tenancy management and repair and maintenance of the capital investment, is to ensure as many local Indigenous people as possible are able to be trained, recruited and retained in the growing number of ongoing jobs those tasks will provide.

As mentioned earlier in the report, this is both a sectoral challenge in terms of training and professional support for employees and a key challenge for employment service providers funded by government to increase Indigenous employment outcomes in remote Indigenous communities.

The Commonwealth Government's new Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP), which will commence from 1 July 2013, should provide an early opportunity for focus on this issue. For a number of local people, employed during the NPARIH construction phase, that employment is now close to winding up, or has already finished, and in many cases the valuable skills and training gained will soon be underutilised. While not all these people will be able or prepared to transition into the available ongoing jobs, a challenge for RJCP providers will be to build on this base and ensure emerging job opportunities are not lost to local Indigenous people either in remote communities or in other locations. **Appendix 9** provides information on the new RJCP and a map of RJCP locations across the country.

Transition into mainstream jobs, either in industries such as mining where opportunities may be available close to communities, or through effective linkages to Employment Related Accommodation in regional centres, which offer a greater number of sustainable job opportunities, also need to be vigorously pursued by employment service providers operating in remote communities.

Western Australia notes that private contractors from the mining industry in the Kimberley regularly seek out NPARIH Indigenous workers for longer term sustainable jobs in the mining industry.

There are examples of Indigenous NPARIH construction employees taking up work outside their communities once the local work has finished.

A worker from Lajamanu in the Northern Territory started working with New Future Alliance (NFA) in late 2011 in his own community. He continued working with NFA on NPARIH construction once the work in Lajamanu was completed. He is now working with NFA in Hermannsburg (Ntaria) and, through that work, has been offered an apprenticeship with a local construction company, Probuild. He makes the long trip home to visit family every few weeks (from 'NFA and Ntaria Community Working Together' brochure).

Part of the challenge is to ensure linkages between housing authorities, employment agencies and remote job service providers are strengthened so that employees with the skills and potential have the opportunity to transition smoothly from local NPARIH construction to other employment and/or training leading to jobs. Similarly, opportunities for local enterprise development, leveraging off the NPARIH investment, should be supported through these linkages.

In Western Australia, three workshops are being organised in different locations to provide information for contractors on government contracting opportunities flowing from the NPARIH. The workshops are focussing on Indigenous employment and business opportunities. The first workshop was held in Broome. They are being organised jointly by two Western Australian Government agencies, Housing and Indigenous Affairs and the Commonwealth Department of FaHCSIA.

Figure 12. Maningrida, Northern Territory



3.4.2 Employment Related Accommodation (ERA)

Output (f): accommodation such as hostels and subsidised rental housing in regional areas to support people from remote communities to access training, education, employment and support services.

NPARIH Benchmarks are: 'bilateral arrangements between state government agencies and employers to partner phased roll-out of construction of employment and training related affordable rental accommodation for people from remote areas of high employment need – number of hostel-style accommodation facilities constructed by 2018 – number of family-style accommodation facilities constructed by 2018'; '100 per cent availability for Indigenous people from remote communities'.

The provision of affordable accommodation in regional centres to support people from remote Indigenous communities to access training, education and employment opportunities is an important component of the NPARIH. The NPARIH requires a phased roll-out of this type of accommodation by 2018.

This initiative recognises people living in remote Indigenous communities do not always have access to these opportunities within their communities and like other Australian citizens, can benefit from mobility in and out of their home community to take up such opportunities.

The NPARIH allows for the provision of affordable accommodation through a range of mechanisms, such as construction of new hostels, the purchase of existing hostel accommodation and construction or purchase of existing family homes. The different types of accommodation can cater for a variety of personal circumstances and support the needs of individuals and families which maximises access to the program.

Achievements to Date

Through the ERA initiative a total of 88 houses and units providing over 275 bedrooms and four hostels with 68 beds are now in place in regional areas across the country. In addition, ERA has partly funded a police officer training facility with 30 beds in Darwin. The Cape York Australian Football League (AFL) facility in Cairns has also been funded and opened for business with 27 students in residence, achieving 100 per cent attendance at training and education activities.

Figure 13. Buraluba Yara Ngurra hostel – Halls Creek, Western Australia



ERA facilities are located in:

- NSW: Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Armidale, Tamworth, Newcastle, Maitland, Wollongong, Albury, Bathurst, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Broken Hill, Orange, Lismore and Griffith.
- Queensland: Townsville, Gladstone, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Cairns.
- Western Australia: Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Broome and Derby.
- South Australia: in the remote administration centre of Umuwa and in regional centres of Port Augusta, Ceduna and Roxby Downs.

Planning is underway for development of employment related accommodation in Tasmania. This could potentially deliver up to five independent units in Launceston, to provide affordable accommodation for Indigenous people from Cape Barren and Flinders Islands to access employment, education and training opportunities. The delivery model for the proposed facilities was being finalised at the time of this report.

South Australia has commenced a comprehensive process of consultation with Indigenous people from remote communities about employment related accommodation so that future ERA facilities can be planned and targeted appropriately.

In NSW, ERA is available in 15 locations, with a mix of shared single housing and family housing. At June 2012, there were 16 shared single houses and 32 family houses. The NSW Aboriginal Housing Office has developed information material outlining the experiences of some Indigenous people from remote locations who have taken up ERA opportunities. The following extracts are sourced from that material.

Mark is a young student currently living in an ERA property near Armidale. He had never thought about moving because of the financial responsibilities of moving. For Mark, the ERA program has allowed him to study and live in a nice place in a regional centre.

He said, 'I was afraid of moving because I would have to find a place to live and I knew I would not be able to cope financially because I could not work enough hours to support myself because I study full time. This program has allowed me to do everything I wanted to do. I am now thrilled about the future and the opportunities I have.'

Lyneah is a young student who has moved from Bourke to pursue her dreams of studying beauty at TAFE in Dubbo.

She said, 'this is a wonderful program for young people living in remote areas. It gives us an opportunity to pursue our goals outside of our remote community and it will also be a good example for others who are thinking about moving but have not taken the first steps. I would never have thought of leaving Bourke and living in a regional centre without this program.'

Scott is a mature aged student enrolled in a hospitality degree at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. He has been living in an ERA property for around 12 months.

'I always wanted to study hospitality. I tried living on campus at first but, being a mature student, the atmosphere just didn't suit me. I needed a place that would allow me to focus on my studies. The ERA program was perfect. (It) gives you more than just a house to live in - it gets you excited about what lies ahead.'

Zona is a mother of three teenagers, from a remote community. She is enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program in Newcastle, which she hopes to convert into a teaching degree.

'I want to be a primary school teacher so I am learning to teach others one day,' she said. 'It is not easy growing up in a remote community because the opportunities are limited. I wanted to do something for myself and also set a good example for my children. I could never afford to move and set up a new life for my family. The ERA program will not only give my family a home, it will give me opportunity and hope that it is never too late to follow your dreams.'

Next Steps with Employment Related Accommodation

While jurisdictions are proposing additional ERA facilities, they are giving further consideration to a number of key issues:

- Improving ways of attracting Indigenous people from remote communities where there has been long-term, multi-generational unemployment and often few role models for education or jobs.
- Ensuring Indigenous people from remote communities can get the best results from their experience in the accommodation.
- Ensuring the long-term viability of the ERA model, particularly the ongoing financial viability as the NPARIH progresses.

In Western Australia, through BHP Billiton and the Royalties for Regions program funding is being leveraged to build two hostels in the Pilbara, in Newman and Port Headland, associated with mining and other industry opportunities.

Greater focus is being placed on planning for the future, including a needs analysis to inform the location of regional centres, the type and location of facilities within those centres, the number of facilities in each location and the mix of dwelling types.

Access to comprehensive support services and related community networks with a good record of working successfully with Indigenous Australians is also important in matching residents support needs with available services. Linkages with the new RJCP provider network will be important. Well-targeted wrap around services have been important in supporting ERA clients to settle into new communities and effectively access training, employment and other services such as health and child care.

In relation to education and employment, the focus is on the range and diversity of locally accessible education, training and employment opportunities with access to job service agencies and related networks. The NSW Aboriginal Housing Office reports it is working closely with local employers and academic institutions to assist a smooth transition into education and/or employment.

Promotional strategies are being developed to target potential ERA clients in remote communities, as well as evaluation processes to measure outcomes. Sharing information and lessons learned across jurisdictions is also important to achieving successful outcomes.

Wunan Foundation Transitional Accommodation

Wunan Foundation is an Aboriginal run organisation based in Kununurra in the East Kimberley in WA. It provides opportunities for Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley who are prepared to 'step up' to improve their lives in a sustainable way through education, employment, affordable housing and tackling welfare dependency.

Wunan Foundation manages Burralluba Yura Ngurra Halls Creek Workers Hostel, which is funded under the ERA component of the NPARIH, and visited in the course of the review.

In addition, Wunan operates a transitional housing model, supported by government through the East Kimberley Development Package and by the private sector. While this initiative does not receive NPARIH funding, it is a successful example of an employment and education related accommodation model, benefiting Indigenous people from across the East Kimberley region, where there are a significant number of remote Indigenous communities receiving NPARIH housing investment.

The review was advised there is interest in the Kimberley in developing similar models to the Wunan model in locations outside Kununurra.

3.4.3 Land Reform

Output (g): progressive resolution of land tenure on remote community-titled land in order to secure government and commercial investment, economic development opportunities and home ownership possibilities in economically sustainable communities.

In the report of September 2011, the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Service Delivery highlighted the urgent need for land reform in remote Indigenous communities. In describing the situation in RSD communities the report said:

‘(the) communities have not been subject to mainstream land use planning regimes or other investment safeguards, including building codes and consumer warranty protections. This has resulted in poorly planned and constructed communities and contributed to the many shortcomings in infrastructure, housing and service provision. It is important that normal government regulation that applies in non-Indigenous communities applies in remote Indigenous communities’¹³.

He also notes that the absence of land use planning regimes:

- Inhibit construction projects that will benefit a community.
- Impede forward planning for the provision of infrastructure.
- Limit private investment and opportunities for commercial development and home ownership.

It is in this broader land reform context that governments committed, under the NPARIH, to the progressive resolution of land tenure issues on remote community-titled land to secure government investment and provide opportunities for commercial investment, economic development and private home ownership. They agreed to review their legislative and administrative arrangements to identify any impediments to the provision of standardised tenancy management and the transferability of individual titles to facilitate home ownership, attract commercial investment and support economic development.

Before social housing construction begins in a community secure, tenure through leases or equivalent mechanisms must be in place. The aim is to secure tenure for a minimum of 40 years to give governments certainty of control over social housing assets for the long term. It establishes much clearer responsibilities for governments to manage and maintain those assets to public housing standards for the duration of the lease. It underpins tenancy management agreements between a state or Northern Territory housing authority and tenants, based on the relevant residential tenancy legislation. This in turn provides greater certainty for tenants that they will be supported and the house they are renting will be well maintained.

This is a significant change from past practice, where historically investments in social housing were made on the basis of informal agreements covering use of land in remote Indigenous communities, if any. This resulted in a lack of clarity in relation to where responsibility lay for maintenance and management of housing longer term and, consequently, left governments with largely unprotected assets and tenants largely unsupported through patchy repairs and maintenance regimes.

¹³ Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Service Delivery, September 2011, “Six Monthly Report; September 2011”

While it is a pre-condition to housing investment under the NPARIH, the negotiation of secure tenure arrangements is a voluntary process, that respects the rights and position of the Indigenous land owners, ensures any applicable Native Title processes have been followed and preserves underlying communal title.

A representative of the Northern Land Council, involved in negotiating long-term leases on behalf of Indigenous Land Owners, reported there is now considerable support for the leases. Traditional Owners can see benefits associated with the leases, including additional investment in housing related infrastructure in communities, and the requirement that rent be paid for the use of land for government owned non-public housing assets and infrastructure. The leasing process can also provide greater clarity around how the land is being used.

Amendments to Native Title Act

In 2010, the Commonwealth Government amended the Native Title Act 1993, inserting a new subdivision, Section 24JAA. The amendment provides an alternative future act process through which state governments can proceed in order to ensure Native Title compliance for building social housing and public infrastructure on land that is, or may be, subject to Native Title. The amendments retain the 'non-extinguishment principle', therefore compensation for any impairment of Native Title rights and interests still applies. The new process includes a proper consultation mechanism and reduces untimely administrative processes that may hinder the roll-out of much needed social housing and related public infrastructure. The mechanism is only available in relation to public buildings and infrastructure for the benefit of the particular Indigenous community.

The amendments to the Native Title Act were important, particularly for Western Australia and Queensland.

Often the resolution of Native Title issues is only one of the land issues that need to be negotiated. In many cases, the Indigenous owners of the land also need to agree to a lease or lease-like arrangement. The Native Title owners may be a different group or subset of the owners of the land for leasing purposes. These interlinking arrangements and processes can make the secure tenure elements of building and managing social housing very complex.

Relevant legislation is different across the states and the Northern Territory. Each jurisdiction is addressing this issue consistent with its own particular legislative requirements.

Despite the complexities, substantial progress is being made.

Implementation Approaches

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory, NPARIH housing works are being delivered to communities with a mix of land tenure such as community-titled land covered by the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976*, community living areas and NT Government freehold land. The four Northern Territory Land Councils have responsibilities, including in relation to the granting of lease interests in Aboriginal land under sections 19 and 19A of the Act. Both sections of the Act enable the negotiation of long-term leases to secure tenure. For NPARIH-purposes section 19 leases have been more frequently used to secure housing investment. Section 19A whole of township leases provide a way to protect underlying title while expanding opportunities for business and private home ownership.

Since 2007, 40-year voluntary leases over social housing have now been agreed in 41 communities that were formerly under a five-year lease. In other communities, negotiations for voluntary long-term leases are still underway, with interim arrangements in place to ensure residents continue to receive regular property and tenancy management services. Long-term leases have now been agreed for the 16 larger communities in the Northern Territory allocated major housing works.

In addition, six Northern Territory communities, Wurrumiyanga, Milikapiti and Ranku on the Tiwi Islands and Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago, have whole-of-township leases in place. The Executive Director of Township Leasing, an independent statutory officer established under the Act, holds and administers the township leases on behalf of the Australian Government and can grant sub-leases for business investment and home ownership.

The township leases, 99 years for the Tiwi Island communities and 40 plus 40 years for the Groote Eylandt communities, enable social housing investment and open up additional opportunities for economic development, commercial investment and home ownership. As part of the township leases agreed to date, a comprehensive land survey has been provided, as well as a community benefits package and an upfront payment to Traditional Owners, which can support economic development in the communities. To date, 16 Wurrumiyanga families have entered into residential sub-leases to purchase their own homes.

Western Australia

In Western Australia, Aboriginal land comprises a mix of tenure arrangements made under various enabling legislation including freehold, leasehold and reserved land managed by or on behalf of Aboriginal people. The amendment to the Native Title Act 1993 helped to clear the way for NPARIH investment in social housing and infrastructure.

The Western Australian Government introduced legislative reforms in 2010 to provide secure tenure on public housing on Crown reserves and has subsequently negotiated Housing Management Agreements (HMAs) in remote Indigenous communities, with over 1250 houses covered and more under negotiation. The HMAs enable the Western Australian Government to manage public housing on Aboriginal land by providing a sufficient security of tenure.

A related development is the State Activities Funding Agreement (SAFA) between the WA Government and the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), agreed in 2012, leveraging off the KLC's involvement in securing tenure for housing investment in communities in the Kimberley. The SAFA aims to ensure that government interests and investments in Kimberley communities are delivered through a planned and coordinated process. Housing, community infrastructure, roads, geological surveys, planning and land divestment are included in the scope of the Agreement. The Department of Housing administers the SAFA on behalf of the state and coordinates planning with the KLC, which is funded by the government to manage community consultations, heritage surveys and any broader consultation required.

Queensland

Queensland is approaching the issue of long term leases in remote Indigenous communities in a comprehensive way. It has agreed to take leases over all housing in remote communities, including existing stock. It has had to amend various pieces of state legislation to simplify long-term leasing for social housing and other investment in the state's remote Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) communities. Amendments have been necessary to the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*, the *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991*, the *Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander (Land Holding) Act 1985*, the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* and the *Land Act 1994*.

Recently, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Land Holding Act 2013 has been passed. The legislation replaces the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander (Land Holding) Act 1985 and enables approximately 400 unresolved applications for perpetual leases to be addressed. Resolving these issues may enable home ownership for many applicants or their beneficiaries. The legislation also includes other measures, including the enabling of subdivision of DOGIT land.

Lease negotiations for social housing in Queensland involve a two-part process. A Deed of Agreement to Lease is negotiated, following in-principle agreement by an Indigenous Council and checks regarding Native Title compliance. This enables work for social housing to commence. A range of planning work is then undertaken, including checks of relevant Land Use Planning Schemes, lot surveys and road plans. A development application is then submitted, and once it is approved, a 40-year social housing lease is executed. These leases are then able to be converted to 99-year home ownership leases without the need for additional time consuming processes.

At time of drafting this report, 1347 leases and 1086 Deeds of Agreement to lease are in place for social housing lots in 14 communities.

The major focus of the construction program in Queensland to date has been to construct on available land. As land is scarce in many Indigenous communities, to deliver the construction program over the final half of the program, new lots will need to be created and infrastructure developed to meet the delivery targets.

Queensland faces particular challenges in negotiating land reform outcomes in remote Indigenous communities, because of the need to work with Indigenous Local Government Councils. Having the formal local government arrangements in place in remote communities can be an advantage in terms of local administrative capacity. It also introduces a unique

and challenging dynamic between the role and responsibilities of local government, and the requirement of the state government's housing authority, to deliver housing outcomes that meet design and cost requirements within an agreed timeframe. While both organisations want the improved housing outcomes in the end, the negotiation of arrangements to underpin this is not always easy.

There is added complexity in negotiations because of the cultural and local government responsibilities that Indigenous Councils have, and the dual role Councillors are expected to play as trustees of the land and members of a local government council. Among the ongoing challenges identified by Queensland is consideration of the future role, and perhaps further regularisation, of Indigenous Local Government Councils as their rates base builds, with the potential for private home ownership and economic development and investment opportunities opening up.

The Queensland Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office

To drive the leasing process and reform land administration and town planning processes in remote Indigenous communities, the Queensland Government established the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office (RILIPO) in July 2009. The Program Office, as it is known, sits within the Indigenous Affairs portfolio in the Queensland Government. It works closely with the Indigenous Local Government Councils from the DOGIT communities and coordinates across government agencies needing to deliver essential infrastructure such as school facilities, health clinics and staff accommodation in the communities.

Key features of the work of the Program Office include:

- The cross-government Board of Directors General, which meets every six weeks to monitor progress and provide direction, particularly in relation to any potential barriers to the implementation of social housing and related infrastructure.
- The Board also meets quarterly as a 'Partnership Board' with three Indigenous Council Mayors (representing all Indigenous Councils).
- The development of Remote Land and Infrastructure Plans for DOGIT communities, identifying current issues and future needs.
- The Technical Working Groups set up for each community to maintain effective communication and consultation between the Program Office and the community, and ensure social housing implementation is well coordinated with broader infrastructure developments on the ground.

South Australia

In South Australia, a 50-year ground lease was signed in 2008 between the SA Government and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands Executive Council, with the aim of securing tenure for NPARIH housing investment. Since April 2012, the SA Government has finalised a lease variation to secure housing investment in Pukatja, Kaltjiti and Pipalyatjara. These communities are located on APY lands where, in total, lease variations to allow for public housing have been executed in nine communities, covering over 550 dwellings.

Outside the APY Lands, in communities situated on Aboriginal Lands Trust land, 40-year leases have been signed in four communities, Yalata, Koonibba, Raukkan and Point Pearce. Dunjiba has also signed a lease.

Private Home Ownership and Economic Development

In urban and regional areas, home ownership rates were 39 per cent for Indigenous households compared to 70 per cent for non-Indigenous households in 2011¹⁴. Work is underway across jurisdictions to reduce current barriers to private home ownership and economic development in remote Indigenous communities.

It is a complex process requiring resolution of Native Title issues and reform to aspects of land administration systems, legislation and investment in infrastructure to facilitate the creation of individual transferrable interests in community-titled land for home ownership and commercial purposes.

There are examples of progress.

Queensland

In Queensland, significant work has been done to amend and simplify legislation. The Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office is paving the way for 99-year leases that will enable home ownership by ensuring that, as it concludes 40-year social housing leases in communities, lot surveys, road plans and development applications are in place. The Queensland Government appears close to resolving the remaining outstanding policy issues around private home ownership on community-titled land.

In the meantime, there is growing interest in remote communities in the state. In the four Cape York Welfare Reform communities, Aurukun, Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge and Coen, enabling private home ownership opportunities has been an important part of the work effort from the start. In the context of the review, it was clear Indigenous Local Government Councils have the issue of private home ownership in focus. A number of residents of remote communities, where Native Title issues have been resolved, already have pre-approved loans with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) for the purchase of homes within their communities. Once outstanding policy issues are addressed, these should proceed.

Recently, IBA approved the first Queensland emerging markets home loan for a house to be privately built at Hope Valley Estate, freehold land adjacent to Hope Vale in Cape York.

The Queensland Government released a discussion paper on 15 November 2012 on *Providing freehold title in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities* to further advance the thinking around opportunities for private home ownership on Indigenous land. The Queensland Government is receiving submissions and conducting associated consultations.

¹⁴ ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory whole-of-township leases enable private home ownership and commercial development. Sixteen Indigenous families have now purchased their own homes with loans from IBA.

New South Wales

Through NPARIH funding, the NSW Government is proposing to support home ownership opportunities for Indigenous people who are social housing tenants in three remote locations – Bourke, Coonamble and Walgett on existing titled properties.

There are a number of factors that have influenced the NSW plan to focus on these locations, including:

- Relatively high proportions of Indigenous social housing tenants who can afford median house prices.
- Relatively high proportions of Indigenous households who already own or are buying their own home.
- An active home purchase market.

NSW plans to pilot the initiative, called the *Aboriginal Home Ownership Project* in the three locations from later in 2013, redirecting \$4.1 million of NPARIH capital works funding towards a home loan scheme managed by IBA. This would effectively use NPARIH funds that would otherwise be used to construct eight houses to enable home loans for at least 16 households.

The key objectives of the Aboriginal Home Ownership Project include:

- Increasing the transition from public or private rental to home ownership through targeted investment that results in at least 16 Indigenous households owning their own home.
- Encouraging ongoing development of home ownership as a cultural norm for Indigenous people, so that people in a position to take up home ownership are enabled to do so.
- Improving the financial and social circumstances in remote locations over the longer term through realisation of the economic and social benefits that generally accrue from home ownership.

The project will be kept under review as it progresses through planning and implementation phases, with a post-implementation review due to be completed in time for consideration in the next round of the NPARIH competitive bid process.

Further Development to 2018

These developments are promising but further work is needed to ensure tenure arrangements on Indigenous land in all jurisdictions can facilitate opportunities for private home ownership and commercial development. A number of issues need to be resolved, including:

- Pricing of social housing for sale.
- High costs of construction in remote communities.
- Need for consumer protections for people building their own homes.
- Ensuring people receive appropriate financial advice before purchasing.
- Increasing the interest from mainstream lenders.
- Ensuring potential purchasers receive appropriate investment advice to understand the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing in a remote community and/or a regional town with an existing housing market.

3.5. Indigenous Community Housing Organisation Reform

This initiative is a COAG Reform Payment that required the transfer of responsibility for ICHOs in urban and regional areas to state governments.

ICHOs have historically been a significant source of social housing for Indigenous people in non-remote areas across Australia, with substantial investment from government over a long period. They have sat outside mainstream community housing systems, and have not been subject to key reforms that have occurred in that sector.

ICHOs have operated largely unaccredited and unregistered. Performance has been inconsistent. This has often resulted in inconsistency and a lack of transparency in relation to housing allocation, wait list policy, rent collection, tenant support and protection, management and maintenance of stock more generally.

The NPARIH provided funding to state governments to reform ICHOs and ensure ICHO owned housing is managed to the same standards as the state's community housing system, including improved property and tenancy management, repairs and maintenance and rent collection. More than \$400 million has been provided to state governments under the NPARIH and related arrangements in Queensland. This is for administrative costs incurred in transitioning ICHOs into their state frameworks and for repairs and refurbishments necessary to bring ICHO stock up to a public housing-like standard.

The aim is to ensure ICHO stock continues to be available to support Indigenous housing need. Most of the stock is located in regional and urban areas in Queensland and New South Wales and, on a smaller scale, in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. The NPARIH ICHO reforms, focussing on urban and regional areas, do not impact on the Northern Territory and Tasmania. The Commonwealth retains rights and interests over some ICHO stock, as a result of historical investment in the properties. This is seen by some jurisdictions as slowing the progress of reform.

The jurisdictions involved are implementing the reforms under different models, dependent on that state's existing system and the willingness and capacity of the ICHOs to undertake the necessary reform. Progress in most jurisdictions has been relatively slow until recently, and achieving systemic and sustainable reform continues to be challenging. However, considerable progress is now being made in a number of jurisdictions. This is summarised below.

New South Wales

NSW has 206 ICHOs (112 are Local Aboriginal Land Councils) managing around 4400 properties. It has the largest ICHO sector. To date 58 have transitioned into the Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy (Build and Grow Strategy) with a further 12 providers undergoing assessment to be approved providers. The Build and Grow Strategy parallels the state's public housing system. Under this arrangement ICHOs are required to meet and operate to public housing standards. The Build and Grow Strategy takes a holistic approach to ICHO reform, it is sector wide and covers remote and non-remote housing in NSW.

The Build and Grow Aboriginal Community Housing Strategy is a series of reforms, implemented by the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO), to improve the performance and financial viability of the Aboriginal community housing sector. It is designed to deliver a robust Aboriginal community housing sector that operates as effectively as the mainstream community housing sector in NSW. Key features of the reforms are:

- Introduction of a new registration policy.
- Implementation of a robust registration assessment and performance monitoring system.
- Introduction of a new rent policy for registered providers.
- Support through the provision of subsidies where needed.
- Provision of backlog maintenance or refurbishment of dwellings for registered providers.
- Access to skills development in business, tenancy and asset management for eligible Approved Providers.
- Opportunity for ACHPs to outsource housing management of their properties to another ACHP registered as an Approved Provider through a head lease agreement with the AHO.
- Opportunities for Approved Providers to grow the size and scope of their housing operations.

The Provider Assessment and Registration System

ACHPs can apply to be assessed as housing providers under the Provider Assessment and Registration System (PARS), which is modelled on the registration system for mainstream community housing. Approved PARS providers are eligible to access backlog repairs/upgrades for their dwellings. They also receive time limited operating subsidies to support transition to a self-sustainable model, and can manage dwellings of unregistered providers.

The AHO has commissioned the NSW Registrar of Community Housing to administer PARS. Implementation of PARS began in 2010 with a nine-provider pilot program. PARS is now being rolled out more broadly across the NSW ICHO sector.

Rent Reforms

A new Rent Policy for the Build and Grow Strategy was issued by the AHO in March 2011 following extensive consultation with the ICHO sector. It requires approved providers to set consistent rents – either a household rent or property rent (market rent) whichever is the lower amount – once the refurbishments of properties have been completed.

Head leasing

Providers that do not wish to obtain PARS registration, or have failed to meet PARS requirements, have the option of entering into a head lease with the AHO (on a five plus five year term). The AHO then subleases the properties to a PARS approved provider, with houses eligible for the upgrade program.

Capacity Building and Business Development

The Build and Grow Strategy includes initiatives to build the capacity of providers including: training, coaching, mentoring and business development. Services are tailored to the specific needs of each provider

Operating Subsidies

NSW approved providers can also be supported by time-limited operating subsidies, funded by the NSW Government, while they are implementing the new rent policy, if they can demonstrate a shortfall on operational funds.

Queensland

Queensland is also implementing ICHO reform on a sector-wide basis, and had commenced the reform process ahead of the NPARIH.

There are 80 ICHOs of varying sizes in Queensland, with around 2000 dwellings. At this point, 33 of the ICHOs, with around 40 per cent of the total stock, have agreed to participate in the reforms. A significant number have not agreed to participate and still sit outside the reforms.

In Queensland, the process has involved registering under the state's *One Social Housing System*, which covers public housing and mainstream community housing providers across the state, transferring stock or entering into a partnership with another provider. Organisations continuing as providers have been provided with operational assistance to help them operate with this system.

ICHOs registering under the One Social Housing System are given some flexibility to recognise their specific circumstances, including a split portfolio option, where only a proportion of their stock transfers across to the One Social Housing System, and exemptions from eligibility requirements for existing tenants for five years.

Western Australia

Western Australia has 12 ICHOs with approximately 400 properties. Where ICHOs demonstrate appropriate capacity, they are registered under the state's mainstream Community Housing Regulatory Framework or may elect to enter into a lease that would see their stock managed by another ICHO. Two ICHOs are registered and another has leased its properties to another ICHO. WA has been investing in Business Development Programs for four large ICHOs with the aim of supporting their registration.

South Australia

In South Australia, the approach to reforms for non-remote Indigenous housing reflects the reform model in remote Indigenous communities. The ICHOs are the Aboriginal Community Councils responsible for a range of local governance and service delivery issues.

There are five ICHOs in SA with 192 properties. By late March 2013, two ICHOs, one with 47 properties and the other with 58 properties, have formally transitioned to the SA Government social housing system, with one other expected to complete transition in the near future. One of the remaining three ICHOs is currently considering options, and the other two have had limited engagement to date.

Victoria

Victoria has 22 former Community Housing and Infrastructure Program organisations, with around 500 dwellings, of which 21 are ICHOs. In 2009, all of the organisations signed a 'Statement of Intent to Transition' over a three-year period. In the interim, Victoria and the ICHOs have focussed on reforming property and tenancy management arrangements. In discussions on the review, Victorian officials stressed the importance of relationship building with a sector for which they had not had responsibility prior to the NPARIH.

Victoria has introduced an accreditation regime for the ICHOs based on the National Community Housing Standards, engaging Global Mark as an independent accreditor, to work with ICHOs at arms-length from government.

At this point, 16 ICHOs have transitioned to the new arrangements, with another three undergoing transition, one other non-functioning and another not currently engaged in the process. A further three ICHOs fall outside the scope of the transition at this stage as they exclusively provide staff housing.

National Regulatory System for Community Housing

A key emerging issue for all states and ICHOs is the implementation of the new National Regulatory System for Community Housing in July 2013, and how they are preparing for this opportunity. The new system will be based on comprehensive, nationally consistent legislation to support growth in the community housing sector and set minimum rules, requirements and powers to manage risks to investors, tenants and governments.

Jurisdictions are considering how to provide support for ICHOs to equip them to meet the standards of the new national system. Ideally if the NPARIH reforms are to be achieved, it will be important that ICHOs in each jurisdiction are able to operate to that professional level.

Section 4. Challenges for the Remaining Years of the NPARIH

Since the NPARIH was signed by governments in 2008, substantial progress has been made. The construction and refurbishment of houses and related infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities has surpassed targets. The reforms needed to progressively enable secure management of the housing stock to public housing-like standards are being put in place. The magnitude of the work undertaken would not have been comprehended only a few years ago.

The governments who are parties to the agreement have risen to the challenge the NPARIH funding provided. They have used the funding within their own systems to implement COAG's objectives and, in many cases, to enhance reforms either underway or in the pipeline within their own jurisdictions. Some good examples of this can be seen in the NSW Build and Grow Strategy; the Western Australian State Activities Funding Agreement; and the RILIPO in Queensland – all included in the report.

Data from 2011 ABS Census indicates some reduction in both overcrowding and severe overcrowding in communities where NPARIH capital works have included the construction of new houses, particularly in RSD communities. High numbers of Indigenous people have been employed during the NPARIH construction phase in local communities, and work is continuing to pave the way for private home ownership and economic investment opportunities in remote communities in a number of jurisdictions.

The NPARIH is half way through its 10 years and governments are generally on track to meet the targets and benchmarks it established.

The work is not finished and there are significant challenges ahead.

4.1. Key Strategic Challenges

The overwhelming challenge for governments is to ensure long term sustainability of the massive, potentially once in a lifetime investment in housing and related infrastructure that has been made possible through NPARIH funding.

No one involved underestimates the enormity of this task, particularly when considered against a background of related policy challenges such as:

- The changing demographics of remote Indigenous communities where populations are getting younger, growing at a steady rate and mobile, or relocating, in some jurisdictions.
- The prospects for future economic activity in some remote Indigenous communities – the NPARIH investment in new housing mainly focussed on larger communities, many of them RSD communities, where future prospects for economic development were considered greatest.
- The cost of repairing, maintaining and rebuilding ageing infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities – the NPARIH funding has enabled a significant number of upgrades to community infrastructure to support housing, but longer term this remains an unresolved policy challenge for governments.

Most critical of all is the need to firmly embed the systemic reform of property and tenancy management currently being implemented in remote Indigenous communities through the NPARIH.

While keeping up momentum on the timely delivery of the remaining capital works commitments, governments need to shift the strategic focus to property and tenancy management to ensure their practice in remote communities delivers equivalent service to their mainstream public housing practice.

This is vital both for sustainability of the housing assets and to underpin changes for tenants in social housing in remote communities to ensure they have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities for paying fair rent, caring for their house and notifying authorities about repairs and maintenance issues.

It is not an easy task. It requires sustained effort and dedicated, resilient individuals and service providers who are capable of providing robust management of the reformed system, but also ongoing guidance and support for tenants who are undergoing a significant change management process.

Governments face particular financial and operational challenges in small very remote communities with poor economies of scale, little prospect of future economic activity, and where there is a comparatively large amount of existing, unimproved stock. The cost of implementation and ongoing support in these locations will make progress difficult, and this issue will need to be kept under review in the remaining years of the NPARIH.

All governments will need to guard against inertia as implementation of the reforms continues over the long term. Completion of capital works effort is an immediate and visible physical achievement, which can be rewarding and invigorating for tenants and housing authorities alike. Property and tenancy management activities such as collection of rent, repairs and maintenance, completed inspections, signed tenancy agreements will be visible as positive achievements. Measuring the effectiveness of this activity in terms of fundamental change for tenants, and sustainability of investment, is harder and will only be clearly visible over time.

4.2. Practical Challenges

Between now and 2018, there are a number of significant practical challenges to be met if governments are to stay on track to achieve the targets and benchmarks of the NPARIH and ensure sustainability of the effort and investment.

The practical challenges have been largely identified throughout the report and are summarised below.

4.2.1. Reformed Property and Tenancy Management

Tenant Support

This is an integral part of effective tenancy management, particularly in remote Indigenous communities where literacy and numeracy tend to be relatively poor and the extent of change required by tenants under the reformed arrangements is significant. Implementation is currently lagging behind other property and tenancy management initiatives.

All jurisdictions have in place, or are developing, tenant support services and living skills programs, as required by the NPARIH. The challenge will be to ensure these programs have lasting impact. This means they need to be ongoing for a period after tenants move into upgraded accommodation, not just one-off experiences ahead of, or immediately following, the move.

As the reforms continue to roll-out, the key focus for governments must be on providing the best possible service to tenants. Within that context, it is expected as the reforms are fully implemented over the next few years that more local people should be able to take up opportunities for employment in the growing pool of tenancy management and tenancy support jobs in remote Indigenous communities.

Employing, training and retaining local people to deliver the ongoing support services will be important if costs are to be contained. It can also increase the likelihood that trust can be developed between the tenant and the housing authority the local employee represents - although this can be challenging for local people, who potentially face greater pressure from other community members who are tenants, when difficult issues arise in the course of their employment.

There is a sectoral development challenge to be met here, where the aim should be to strengthen the skills and knowledge of local Indigenous employees through the same quality of training, support and professional development as their counterparts in similar mainstream public housing jobs. It is also part of the challenge for employment service agencies funded by government to improve overall Indigenous employment outcomes in remote Indigenous communities.

Reformed Rent

The introduction of reformed rent levels is progressing well in most jurisdictions but remains a challenge in some, with pre-reform rent continuing to be collected in some cases after tenants have moved into their new accommodation. There is a critical, logical link between the capital works upgrades and the requirement for tenants to pay fair rent. The longer this issue is left unaddressed the harder it is to leverage off that linkage so that tenants who have paid low rent, or no regular rent, in the past understand the reason for an increase in rent payments in the new accommodation. In addition, without the necessary reform there will be less funding available for repairs and maintenance, an important protection for both tenants and sustainability of the housing assets.

Under the NPARIH, rent is set consistently with public housing arrangements, meaning generally rent is set at a proportion of assessable income for a household and, in the Northern Territory, for all tenants in a house who have signed a tenancy agreement. The system can be complex and costly to administer in remote communities with highly mobile populations, and difficult for tenants to fully understand.

Almost all jurisdictions have raised the need to review these arrangements and implement a simpler, less costly system. NSW is using a robust, relatively straightforward dwelling based system that is less complex to administer, and intends to keep using this model for at least another 12 months. There would be an opportunity for governments to keep both systems

under review over the next year and to assess the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement.

Structural Issues - Service Delivery

Property and tenancy management is implemented through different service delivery models. This tends to be either through direct delivery by government housing authorities, the use of a service provider network or a mix of both models.

Establishing a quality service provider network in remote locations can be challenging. There is often a lack of competition, with proven and experienced providers who operate in urban or major regional locations shying away from the remote work because of cost, distance and other factors that can make achieving agreed outcomes more difficult.

If the housing reforms in remote Indigenous communities are to be sustainable, the use of external service providers may need to grow. Effort will be needed to both attract experienced community housing providers and to invest in all involved organisations to ensure they have the capacity to operate to the standards required of community housing organisations in mainstream public housing systems. The risk of not doing this is that organisations with poor capacity, poor performance and an uncertain financial position can deliver a below standard service, impacting on both Indigenous tenants and the remote housing system as a whole.

The challenge for governments and for the NGOs is to develop and grow a remote service delivery network that can operate to the same standards of professionalism, accountability, financial management and tenant support as community housing organisations in broader social housing systems.

Over time, NGOs delivering property and tenancy management in remote Indigenous communities should be able to meet the standards of the new National Regulatory System for Community Housing, due to be implemented from July 2013. The National Regulatory System is being introduced to achieve a well-governed, well-managed and viable community housing sector that meets the housing needs of tenants and provides assurance for government and investors.

Improving Performance Benchmarks

Existing performance benchmarks in the NPARIH provide only limited visibility of progress on property and tenancy management reforms, and do not enable effective assessment of performance where different service delivery arrangements are implemented across jurisdictions, i.e. direct delivery by government or delivery through a service provider network, such as the ACHPs in NSW.

To drive the reforms forward, it is essential to have an accurate understanding of trends, impacts and service standards of each key element of a tenancy management system over time. This will become more important over the remaining years of the NPARIH, to ensure the 2015 benchmark is met.

As the focus shifts from capital works targets to sustainability of the property and tenancy management system, protecting the massive investment of funding and maintaining the

quality of the work done, it will be critical to understand what works well and where changes, further development or refinement of systems might be required.

There is an opportunity for jurisdictions to jointly review and further develop the existing benchmarks for these critical reforms when Implementation Plans are renegotiated later this year, with regard to standards of tenancy management, rent collection, repairs and maintenance and tenancy support.

4.2.2. Employment and Workforce Development

All jurisdictions have been meeting or exceeding the NPARIH benchmark of 20 per cent of local Indigenous employment during construction.

One challenge for the remaining years of the NPARIH as the focus shifts from capital works to property and tenancy management and repair and maintenance of the capital investment, is to ensure as many local Indigenous people as possible are able to be trained, recruited and retained in the growing pool of jobs those tasks will provide.

As mentioned above, this is both a sectoral challenge in terms of training and professional support for employees, and a key challenge for government-funded employment service providers in remote Indigenous communities.

The Commonwealth Government's new RJCP, commencing from 1 July 2013, should provide an early opportunity for focus on this issue. For a number of local people employed during the NPARIH construction phase, that employment is now close to winding up or has already finished. In many cases the valuable skills and training gained will soon be under-utilised. Not all these people will be able or prepared to transition into the available ongoing jobs. A challenge for RJCP providers will be to build on this base and ensure emerging job opportunities are not lost to local Indigenous people, either in communities or in other locations.

Transition into mainstream jobs, either in industries such as mining, where opportunities may be available close to communities, or through effective linkages to employment related accommodation in regional centres, which offer a greater number of sustainable job opportunities, need to be vigorously pursued by employment service providers operating in remote communities.

Part of the challenge is to ensure linkages between housing authorities, employers, employment agencies and remote job service providers are strengthened so employees with the skills and potential have the opportunity to transition smoothly from local NPARIH construction to other employment and/or training leading to jobs. Similarly, opportunities for local enterprise development, leveraging off the NPARIH investment, should be supported through these linkages.

4.2.3. Employment Related Accommodation (ERA)

ERA facilities aim to provide affordable accommodation for people from remote Indigenous communities to access education, training and employment opportunities in regional centres across the country. Some of the facilities are at full capacity while others are expected to reach full capacity over time.

Additional facilities are planned and as planning progresses governments are focusing on how to better attract Indigenous people from remote communities where there has been multi-generational unemployment and to ensure Indigenous clients get the best results from their experience in the accommodation.

The quality of the experience and enabling successful outcomes for the client are a key challenge for the future. Greater focus is needed in the planning stage on issues such as needs analyses to inform the location of regional centres, the type and location of facilities within those centres, number of facilities in each location and the mix of dwelling types.

Access to comprehensive support services and related community networks with a good record of working successfully with Indigenous Australians is also important in matching residents support needs with available services. Well-targeted wrap-around services have been important in supporting ERA clients to settle into new communities and effectively access training, employment and other services such as health and child care.

Jurisdictions are also considering how to ensure the long-term viability of the ERA model, particularly the ongoing financial viability as the NPARIH progresses.

Other key issues for planning additional ERA facilities include:

- The range and diversity of locally accessible education, training and employment opportunities, with access to job service agencies and related networks.
- Promotional strategies to target potential ERA clients in remote communities.
- Evaluation processes to measure outcomes achieved.
- Sharing information and lessons learned across jurisdictions.

4.2.4. Private Home Ownership

In urban and regional areas, around 40 per cent of Indigenous people own their homes. Work is underway across jurisdictions to reduce current barriers to private home ownership and economic development in remote Indigenous communities.

It is a complex process, requiring resolution of Native Title issues and reform to aspects of land administration systems, legislation and investment in infrastructure to facilitate the creation of individual transferrable interests in community-titled land for home ownership and commercial purposes.

There are promising examples of progress, particularly in Queensland and the Northern Territory. In NSW, work is also progressing, focussing on existing titled land in remote towns.

Further work and focus is needed over the second half of the NPARIH to ensure tenure arrangements on Indigenous land in all jurisdictions can facilitate opportunities for private home ownership and commercial development.

Issues that still need to be resolved include:

- The pricing of social housing for sale.
- Adequately preparing people for home ownership when they have never owned a home before.
- The high costs of construction in remote communities.

- The need for consumer protections for people building their own homes.
- Ensuring people receive appropriate financial advice before purchasing.
- Increasing the interest from mainstream lenders.
- Ensuring potential purchasers receive appropriate investment advice to enable them to understand the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing in a remote community and/or a regional town with an existing housing market.

4.2.5. Capital Works

Housing Related Infrastructure and Municipal and Essential Services

Upgrading housing-related community infrastructure and municipal and essential services has been an important part of the NPARIH capital works program. Under the NPARIH, a National Audit of Municipal and Essential Services was undertaken during 2009-10 to assess the levels of outstanding need for infrastructure in remote Indigenous communities.

The National Audit confirmed the level of infrastructure and essential services in remote Indigenous communities does not meet the standard generally available in non-Indigenous communities of a similar size and location, and that services are consistently unreliable and suffer major disruptions. It found differences in existing standards across communities and towns where NPARIH housing is being delivered.

While the NPARIH has provided major upgrading of infrastructure and essential services in a number of communities, the challenge for governments is that significant need remains in many communities to ensure public health and safety standards are maintained, and to support additional housing in the future. The infrastructure gap will grow without further investment in capital works for asset replacement and upgrades.

This is a critical issue for governments as work progresses into the second half of the NPARIH. In some jurisdictions, available infrastructure in some remote Indigenous communities is already at capacity. Where additional housing investment is scheduled, particularly where new subdivisions or upgraded community infrastructure might be required to support new housing, governments need to agree a strategy so that delivery of housing is not delayed.

Nevertheless, the National Audit suggests the infrastructure issues will not be resolved through additional financial investment alone, and identifies a number of broader systemic capacity constraints that are at the heart of the problem. It also identifies areas of focus for state, regional or local government planning processes that require a shift away from the current, mainly reactive approach to funding, including the development of:

- asset management plans for all infrastructure; demand management strategies for water, power and sewerage consumption; and workforce planning strategies with a focus on local employment.

Refurbishments

The fast paced refurbishment work has meant some jurisdictions have already completed their full NPARIH refurbishment program and their remaining capital works funding is for new builds only. This raises a previously unforeseen challenge in that NPARIH does not enable

jurisdictions to refurbish further houses in remote communities. This is an issue that warrants further thinking as part of the future challenge of maintaining the pace of improvement in remote housing.

4.2.6. Joint Governance Arrangements

The highly collaborative practices governments and their officials have adopted to date through the joint governance arrangements established under the NPARIH will stand them in good stead to stay on track over the long haul. Those responsible for implementing the NPARIH credit the 'bipartisan' collaboration with breaking down barriers, enabling innovative and flexible solutions to difficult issues and the capacity to share information and lessons learned across jurisdictions. Continuation of the collaborative approach will be critical for maintaining momentum and enthusiasm for the task ahead.

4.3. Challenges Beyond 2018

One of the objectives of the NPARIH is to 'significantly reduce severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities'. It is difficult at this stage to get a clear picture of the impact to date in addressing this objective.

While the latest ABS Census data is positive and shows some reduction in the proportion of Indigenous households experiencing both overcrowding and severe overcrowding in remote Australia, it is important to note that the 2011 Census took place ahead of the delivery of major capital works in a number of jurisdictions. The full impact of this work is not reflected in the Census data. In light of the additional work that has been completed in remote communities since the Census, it seems reasonable to expect further improvement to have occurred since that time.

Nevertheless, NPARIH funding, as substantial and unprecedented as it is, will not resolve overcrowding in all remote Indigenous communities. Governments understood when they agreed to the NPARIH that while inroads could be made on this issue over the life of the 10-year strategy, more work would remain to be done, particularly in those jurisdictions where chronic overcrowding has existed for generations.

Relevant overcrowding data is not yet available for all communities where NPARIH builds have occurred and consideration is yet to be given to whether progress in addressing severe overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities is more advanced overall in some jurisdictions than in others. That is, is NPARIH funding enabling this issue to be tackled more quickly and comprehensively in some jurisdictions than in others. Over the coming years of the NPARIH, as the remaining major capital works are delivered, governments will need to keep progress against this objective under review.

Over its life, the NPARIH will provide substantial direct and indirect investment in many remote communities across Australia. While considering strategies to ensure the gains made are secured for the long term, governments will need to take the long view, beyond the delivery of houses, to broader issues around building the sustainability of communities once the NPARIH work is finished.

As the report shows, there have been gains for communities in areas that are not direct housing outcomes, e.g. local government capacity in some jurisdictions, employment

outcomes and examples of emerging improvements in quality of life indicators. In this regard, further developing community engagement strategies will be critical to build on gains that have been made.

There is a considerable workload for governments in meeting the practical challenges outlined above for the remaining years of the NPARIH.

At the same time, there is a need for continuing collaborative policy work on the key issues to determine next steps for the second half of the NPARIH and beyond the 10-year strategy.

Some governments have raised issues about the financial sustainability of remote public housing, including funding for capital and operating costs beyond the NPARIH. In mainstream public housing situations, it is possible to divest land and buildings to the open market for public housing re-development which, over the long-term, helps to defray costs and mitigate significant financial risks. In remote Indigenous communities, these options are generally not available to governments and further policy effort is required to work through the risks to sustainability beyond 2018. In this regard, continuing effort on land and economic development reforms is essential.

The thinking will need to take account of those key policy challenges highlighted earlier in this section of the report, i.e. the changing demographics of remote Indigenous communities, the prospects for future economic activity in some remote communities and, the challenges associated with infrastructure and essential services in remote communities.

These are major issues, but there is time before the end of the NPARIH for dedicated focus on them, building on the NPARIH experience and learning to date, and the outcomes emerging from both the broader strategy on Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage and the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

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[National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing](#)

National Investment Principles in Remote Locations

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

E1 National principles for investment in remote locations include:

- (a) Remote Indigenous communities and communities in remote areas with significant Indigenous populations are entitled to standards of services and infrastructure broadly comparable with that in non-Indigenous communities of similar size, location and need elsewhere in Australia.
- (b) Investment decisions should aim to-
 - (i) improve participation in education/training and the market economy on a
 - (ii) sustainable basis;
 - (iii) reduce dependence on welfare wherever possible;
 - (iv) promote personal responsibility; and
 - (v) promote engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.
- (c) Priority for enhanced infrastructure support and service provision should be to larger and more economically sustainable communities where secure land tenure exists, allowing for services outreach to and access by smaller surrounding communities, including-
 - (i) recognising Indigenous peoples' cultural connections to homelands (whether on a visiting or permanent basis) but avoiding expectations of major investment in service provision where there are few economic or educational opportunities; and
 - (ii) facilitating voluntary mobility by individuals and families to areas where better education and job opportunities exist, with higher standards of services.

NIRA Schedule E

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing New South Wales

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 173,000 Indigenous people, 31 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in New South Wales (NSW) in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, fewer than 7,600 were living in remote or very remote parts of the State.

According to the 2011 Census, in remote and very remote parts of NSW around 20 per cent of Indigenous households were in State Housing Authority accommodation, 24 per cent in private rental accommodation and 15 per cent in community housing.

Around 11 per cent of Indigenous households in remote and very remote parts of NSW were overcrowded in the 2011 census. This represents a decrease from 15 per cent in 2006. Three per cent of overcrowded households are severely overcrowded, needing four or more extra bedrooms.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in New South Wales?

Over the life of the agreement, NPARIH funding in NSW will be used to deliver 310 new houses and refurbish around 800 existing houses in remote NSW, including the larger Indigenous communities of Walgett and Wilcannia.

Funding is also being used to provide affordable employment-related accommodation in regional centres to assist Indigenous people from remote communities to access education, training, employment and support services. Locations for this accommodation include Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Armidale, Tamworth, Newcastle, Wollongong, Albury, Bathurst, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Broken Hill and Orange.

NSW has been allocated \$397 million out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion for remote Indigenous housing over 10 years.

Use of NPARIH funding is also being linked to implementation of reforms under the Build and Grow Community Housing Strategy (Build and Grow), which has been developed by the NSW Government. Under Build and Grow, the provision of refurbishment work in remote areas and backlog maintenance in the remainder of NSW is linked to the Aboriginal community housing providers' participation in Build and Grow.

There are four fundamental aspects of Build and Grow:

- Properties and tenancies are managed by Aboriginal community housing providers that are registered on the basis of demonstrating appropriate performance standards
- Backlog maintenance liability of properties has been removed

- Rent reforms are being implemented
- Time-limited capacity support is being provided to develop Aboriginal community housing providers as professional tenancy and property managers.

What has been achieved so far?

As at 31 March 2013, 143 new houses had been completed and 401 houses had been refurbished under the NPARIH in NSW.

In 2011-12 around 29 per cent of employees engaged on NPARIH construction projects in NSW were Indigenous people. This has exceeded the 20 per cent Indigenous employment requirement in the NPARIH.

In NSW, there are approximately 206 Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs) with 4,400 properties. As at early 2013, 64 ICHOs with control of 1,686 properties have transitioned to social housing management standards.

Transition is through participation in Build and Grow, by either meeting performance assessment criteria under the new registration system or by head leasing their houses to the Aboriginal Housing Office, for subsequent management by a performance-approved provider. Repairs and maintenance programs are being rolled out for the properties owned by these ICHOs.

NSW is also well advanced in implementing its 2012-13 Employment Related Accommodation (ERA) program. To date 52 properties have been purchased and a further six properties have been identified in the 2012-13 program for delivery by June 2013. .

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

The ERA program has been successful in enabling Aboriginal people from remote areas to access employment, training or educational opportunities in large towns or regional centres.

This is illustrated by the story of a mother of three teenagers. She successfully applied for the ERA program and lives in Newcastle where she is enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree.

“I want to be a primary school teacher so I am learning to teach others one day” she said. “It is not easy growing up in a remote community because the opportunities are limited. I wanted to do something for myself and also set a good example for my children. The ERA program will not only give my family a home, it will give me opportunity and hope that it is never too late to follow your dreams. This program means that I no longer have to choose between providing a home or studying to achieve my goals. I can do both now. My children will be going to high school in Newcastle and I will be studying at Newcastle University. I am now thrilled about the future and all the opportunities that I have because of this program” she said.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Queensland

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 156,000 Indigenous people, 28 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in Queensland in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, around 30,000 were living in remote and very remote parts of the State.

According to the 2011 Census, in remote and very remote parts of Queensland around 41 per cent of Indigenous households were in State Housing Authority accommodation, 19 per cent in private rental accommodation and 18 per cent in community housing.

Around 26 per cent of Indigenous households in remote and very remote parts of Queensland were overcrowded in the 2011 Census. Ten per cent of overcrowded households were severely overcrowded, needing four or more extra bedrooms.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH Queensland?

Between July 2012 and June 2014, NPARIH funding in Queensland will be used to deliver 325 new houses and 619 refurbishments in 14 remote Indigenous Shire Council regions in Central and Northern Queensland, the Northern Peninsula, Torres Strait Islands and the Gulf. Over the full ten years of the Agreement, 1,141 new dwellings and over 1,216 refurbishments will be delivered.

Funding is also being used to provide affordable accommodation, such as hostel accommodation, in regional centres to assist Indigenous people from remote communities to access education, training and support services. In Queensland this funding is being used for the purchase of employment-related accommodation in areas such as Townsville, Toowoomba, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Cairns.

Queensland has received more than \$88 million to upgrade Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) housing and support ICHOs to transition to the Queensland Government's One Social Housing System.

The Australian Government is providing funding for remote Indigenous housing, which is coordinated with arrangements for delivery of other services and programs to improve the health and economic well-being of Indigenous people in remote communities.

Queensland has been allocated \$1.15 billion out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion for remote Indigenous housing over 10 years.

Under the NPARIH, State Governments are responsible for delivering the reform package, including the provision of housing and associated tenancy management reforms.

The Queensland Government manages housing in remote Indigenous communities in line with principles of its One Social Housing System, which cover all public and community operations in Queensland. Property

management in remote communities is undertaken in accordance with the asset management life cycle used for all other Queensland social housing assets. It is therefore expected to meet the same standards.

Under the NPARIH, State Governments have also been asked to develop and implement land administration arrangements that will facilitate effective asset management, essential services and economic development opportunities, including home ownership.

What has been achieved so far?

As at 31 March 2013, 190 new houses had been completed and 1,026 houses had been refurbished under the NPARIH in Queensland.

In 2011-12 there was around 53 per cent of Indigenous employment on NPARIH construction projects. This has far exceeded the 20 per cent Indigenous employment requirement in the NPARIH.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”.

In order to satisfy Australian Government NPARIH requirements for land tenure reform, amendments to the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (Qld) and Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991 (Qld) were passed in 2008, to make it easier to grant long term leases to a public housing body or to individual households.

Grants of leases to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons for private residential purposes can now be granted for up to 99 years and for commercial purposes for up to 30 years, on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander freehold land, land subject to Deeds of Grant in Trust and Aboriginal reserve land.

As at 31 March 2013, Indigenous Shire Councils for 14 communities targeted for investment under the NPARIH in Queensland, had agreed to 40 year leases for social housing. Of these 14 Indigenous Community Councils, 10 had executed leases and 13 had signed Deeds of Agreement.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing South Australia

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 30,000 Indigenous people, 6 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in South Australia (SA) in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, around 5,000 were living in remote and very remote parts of the State.

According to the 2011 Census, in SA around 35 per cent of Indigenous households were in State Housing Authority accommodation, 17 per cent in private rental accommodation and 21 per cent in community housing.

Around 25 per cent of Indigenous households in remote and very remote parts of South Australia were overcrowded in 2011. This represents a decrease from 26 per cent in 2006. Sixteen per cent of overcrowded households are severely overcrowded, needing four or more extra bedrooms.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in South Australia?

The SA Government has been allocated \$290 million out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion.

For the 10 year period of the NPARIH, the SA Government's target is to deliver 241 new houses and 206 refurbishments.

Between July 2012 and June 2014, NPARIH funding in South Australia will be used to deliver 72 new houses and 60 refurbishments in remote Indigenous communities, including a significant investment in the communities of Indulkana, Mimili, Kaltjiti, Pukatja, Amata, Kalka and Pipalyatjara, in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands.

Funding under the Employment Related Accommodation component of the NPARIH is being used to provide affordable accommodation in regional centres to assist Indigenous people moving from remote communities to undertake employment or training opportunities leading to employment.

What has been achieved so far?

As at 31 March 2013, the SA Government had completed 119 new houses and 177 refurbishments under the NPARIH.

The SA Department for Communities and Social Inclusion has established a regional office to facilitate closer working relationships with communities. Local community members are being employed in the implementation of new property and tenancy management practices.

Under the Employment Related Accommodation component of NPARIH, accommodation has been built or acquired in Umuwa, Ceduna, Port Augusta and Roxby Downs. This accommodation will support people moving from Indigenous communities to regional centres to undertake employment, education and training, leading to employment opportunities in areas such as the resource and mining sectors.

In 2010, a \$6 million investment by the Australian Government under the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program provided support through new housing and construction activities, the provision of environmental health infrastructure, health services and training to Pukatja.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

A 50 year ground lease is in place between the APY Lands Executive Board and the SA Minister for Housing. New dwellings and major refurbishments in communities in the APY lands require a variation to the ground lease. As at March 2013, seven Indigenous communities had negotiated ground lease variations enabling new housing to be developed.

Building Contractors engaged by the SA Government under the NPARIH are contractually required to ensure that local Aboriginal employment hours account for a minimum 20 per cent of the project’s total workforce hours.

Positive employment outcomes include 22 local Indigenous people attaining a Certificate I in Civil Construction during 2010–11, with several participants moving to ongoing employment in the 2010–11 build program. In 2012, 27 remote community members attained Certificate II in Civil Construction, and an additional 15 gained tickets in forklifts and front end loaders. Twenty local Aboriginal employees were recruited and embedded in the contractor workforce for construction of new houses during 2011–12.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Tasmania

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 20,000 Indigenous people, 4 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in Tasmania in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, around 650 were living in remote and very remote parts of the State.

According to the 2011 Census, in remote and very remote parts of Tasmania around 6 per cent of Indigenous households were in State Housing Authority accommodation, 31 per cent in private rental accommodation and 4 per cent in community housing.

Around 4 per cent of Indigenous households in remote and very remote parts of Tasmania were overcrowded in 2011. This represents a decrease from 9 per cent in 2006.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in Tasmania?

Over the 10 year strategy, the Tasmanian Government's target is to deliver 18 new houses and over 57 refurbishments to existing houses.

Between July 2012 and June 2014, NPARIH funding in Tasmania will be used to deliver 4 new houses and 6 refurbishments on Flinders and Cape Barren Islands in Bass Strait, north of mainland Tasmania.

Remote property and tenancy management services are provided through two Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs). Implementation of new policy frameworks which are consistent with Tasmanian public housing arrangements has commenced. Both ICHOs are offering support services to all tenants to help with the transition to the new arrangements.

Tasmania has been allocated \$28 million out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion for remote Indigenous housing over 10 years.

What has been achieved so far?

NPARIH is progressing well in Tasmania, providing much needed housing to Indigenous families sooner than anticipated and addressing homelessness and overcrowding so that they can enjoy life outcomes similar to those expected by other Australians..

As of March 2013, 8 new houses had been completed with two further houses underway, and 51 houses had been refurbished with a further six underway under the NPARIH.

In 2011-12 around 22 per cent of employees engaged on NPARIH construction projects have been local Indigenous people. This has exceeded the 20 per cent Indigenous employment requirement in the NPARIH.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

The Flinders municipality covers more than 60 islands in Bass Strait off the north-eastern tip of Tasmania, only three of which, including Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island, have permanent residents. The Flinders Island Aboriginal Association Incorporated (FIAAI) was first established in 1971 and is governed by a committee of elected Aboriginal members. The FIAAI owns and runs a housing program for Aboriginal people and others on the Island. It has implemented standardised property and tenancy management arrangements that deliver a regular repairs and maintenance program and help tenants to clearly understand the mutual obligations of tenants and landlords. To support tenants through these changes, FIAAI also deliver living skills training and new home orientation support to help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities and how to care for their homes. The FIAAI also owns and operates the only bakery on the Island, and is an agent for Centrelink, the agency responsible for income support.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Victoria

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 38,000 Indigenous people, 7 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in Victoria in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing.

According to the 2011 Census, around 18 per cent of Indigenous households in Victoria lived in State Housing Authority accommodation, 34 per cent in private rental accommodation and 3 per cent in community housing.

In 2011, nine per cent of Indigenous dwellings in Victoria were overcrowded, the same proportion as in 2006.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in Victoria?

As Victoria does not have remote Indigenous housing, activity is focusing on improving Indigenous community housing outcomes in urban and regional areas. There are around 500 Aboriginal Community Housing Organisation (ACHO)-owned houses in Victoria.

Under the reforms, Victorian ACHOs were invited to become a part of the Victorian housing system in one of three ways:

- as a registered housing association or provider;
- as an accredited provider (covering property management, tenancy management and financial viability); or
- forming a formal partnership with a registered housing provider.

What has been achieved so far?

As part of the reforms, the Victorian Government has been working with the sector to embed improved property and Tenancy Management practices, including rent reforms. To date 16 ACHOs have transitioned under one of these pathways.

Organisations participating in the reforms are receiving property upgrades to bring their stock to public housing standards. Based on reporting as at 30 November 2012, 75 refurbishments had been completed.

Victoria has been allocated \$30.35 million over ten years, out of total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion under the National Partnership Agreement on remote Indigenous Housing.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

To implement NAPRIH reforms, lead Victorian Government Agency, DHS has worked closely with ACHOs across Victoria to discuss, plan and collaborate on activities around the implementation of the NPA. A total of 35 individual visits to indigenous communities occurred last financial year. As these communities are sometimes isolated and away from normal DHS regional operations, extensive travel was involved. A total of 15,000 km was travelled over the year visiting indigenous communities across the State.

Visiting ACHOs on site has proven to be the most effective method in developing relationships and engaging with Indigenous communities. Multiple meetings were held with Chief Executive Officers, Housing Officers, Finance Officers and maintenance contractors. Overall there has been a positive response from organisations and a high degree of co-operation and willingness to work through the challenges in the management of housing for Aboriginal communities.

Each organisation has different structures, programs and reporting protocols. On occasions DHS support has included attending community meetings particularly where the issues of rent modelling and repairs and maintenance are discussed. In cases where the ICHO has chosen a partnership arrangement to progress transition to Victoria’s housing system, there has always been joint meetings with the ICHO and the partnering agency.

A number of organisations have also invited DHS to visit homes and talk to tenants about the type and quality of workmanship being undertaken. At several organisations there have also been opportunities for discussions with contractors about work progress and the quality of repairs and maintenance.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Western Australia

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 70,000 Indigenous people, 13 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in Western Australia (WA) in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, around 28,000 were living in remote or very remote parts of the State.

According to the 2011 Census, in remote and very remote parts of WA around 41 per cent of Indigenous households were in State Housing Authority accommodation, 21 per cent in private rental accommodation and 18 per cent in community housing.

Around 27 per cent of Indigenous households in remote and very remote parts of WA were overcrowded in 2011. This represents a decrease from 28 per cent in 2006. In 2011, 14 per cent of overcrowded households are severely overcrowded, needing four or more bedrooms.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in Western Australia (WA)?

Between July 2012 and June 2014, NPARIH funding in WA will be used to deliver 228 new houses and 493 refurbishments in communities across the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields, Ngaanyatjarra Lands and the Midwest. Over the full ten years of the Agreement, 1012 new dwellings and more than 1280 refurbishments will be delivered.

Funding is also being used to provide employment-related accommodation in regional centres.

Under the urban Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) reform project, five major ICHOs are being assisted to develop their capacity and viability as managers of social housing, and to meet requirements for registration under the mainstream community housing framework. NPARIH funding will refurbish up to 370 ICHO properties in regional towns across WA.

The WA Government has also negotiated Housing Management Agreements (HMAs) with communities. These HMAs provide security over housing investment for 40 years.

What has been achieved so far?

The WA Government was initially allocated \$1.18 billion out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion for remote Indigenous housing over 10 years. In 2009, the WA Government received a performance payment of \$4 million for exceeding their new house construction and house refurbishment targets.

As at 31 March 2013, 295 new houses had been completed and 884 houses had been refurbished under the NPARIH in WA.

Under the employment-related accommodation component of the NPARIH, 4 hostels providing 62 beds had been established in the Kimberley region.

In 2011-12, around 34 per cent of employees engaged on NPARIH construction projects have been Indigenous people. This has far exceeded the 20 per cent Indigenous employment requirement in the NPARIH.

Two urban ICHOs are registered under the mainstream community housing framework with two others involved in the registration assessment process. The refurbishment of around 330 houses has been linked to this registration process.

The roll out of mainstream-like social housing tenancy management practices to remote communities has also commenced.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

NPARIH is providing employment-related accommodation allowing Indigenous people in remote areas of WA to access education, training and employment, and to benefit from opportunities associated with the resource boom. For example:

- A hostel at Burks Park near Halls Creek providing 12 single accommodation beds and 4 family units was completed in July 2011;
- A hostel at Fitzroy Crossing providing 8 beds was completed in October 2011;
- At Broome, an accommodation facility providing 19 beds opened in April 2012.
- At Derby, an accommodation facility providing 19 beds, opened in July 2012.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing Northern Territory

What is the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing?

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten year agreement between the Australian Government and the State and Northern Territory (NT) Governments, aimed at reducing significant overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government has provided \$5.5 billion in funding from 2008–09 to improve the standard of housing and reduce overcrowding and homelessness in remote Indigenous communities.

Around 57,000 Indigenous people, 10 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population, were counted in the NT in the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Of these Indigenous people, around 46,000 were living in remote and very remote parts of the Territory.

According to the 2011 Census, in remote and very remote parts of the NT around 54 per cent of Indigenous households were in public housing managed by the NT Government, 12 per cent in private rental accommodation and 19 per cent in community housing.

Around 48 per cent of Indigenous dwellings in remote and very remote parts of the NT were overcrowded in 2011. Twenty-nine per cent of these overcrowded dwellings were severely overcrowded, needing four or more bedrooms.

What is being delivered through the NPARIH in the Northern Territory?

NPARIH funding in the NT will deliver 934 new houses and 2,915 rebuilds and refurbishments by June 2013. For the 10 year period of the NPARIH, the NT Government's target includes the construction of 1,456 new dwellings and 2,915 rebuilds or refurbishments to existing houses.

The NT Government has introduced public housing to 73 remote communities on a similar basis to how these services are run in urban centres in the NT. This will more than double the NT public housing system. Tenancy agreements have been established for all new and refurbished houses setting out the rights and responsibilities of both the tenant and landlord. A living skills program is offered to tenants to support them in transitioning to the new housing management practices.

Funding has also been used to provide affordable employment-related accommodation to assist Indigenous people from remote communities to access education, training, employment and support services.

NT was initially allocated \$1.7 billion out of the total Australian Government funding of \$5.5 billion for remote Indigenous housing over 10 years. Because of the high need for better housing, the Australian Government has, on two occasions, brought forward funding for the NT Government to accelerate the pace of delivery, allowing for delivery of houses earlier than scheduled.

The Australian Government is investing a further \$230.4 million over six years (2012–13 to 2017–18) to continue to improve housing stock in remote communities in the NT. The new funding is a part of a broader Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package and will be used to make houses secure, increase their life span and provide improved amenities for residents.

Under the NPARIH, the NT Government has negotiated agreements with shires (a form of local government) and other providers for the delivery of repairs and maintenance services for remote Indigenous housing.

The NT Government is also progressively implementing a remote rent framework across 73 communities in the Territory. This framework includes rent collection, asset protection measures and tenancy arrangements that are generally consistent with public housing provisions elsewhere.

Territory Housing has established Housing Reference Groups in each community, made up of local Indigenous people living in the community. These Reference Groups are consulted on cultural and family related matters in the community and also advise the NT Government on housing allocations. The NT Government also employs community housing officers based in remote communities to engage with tenants on housing-related matters.

What has been achieved so far?

As at 31 March 2013, 821 new houses had been completed and 2,693 houses had been refurbished or rebuilt under the NPARIH in the NT. The new houses have been built to last at least 30 years.

Indigenous employees have made up around 30 per cent of the workforce engaged in the construction of this housing since the program began, and have been employed on NPARIH projects across 93 communities and town camps in the NT. This has far exceeded the 20 per cent Indigenous employment requirement in the NPARIH.

By early 2012, 14 out of 16 communities prioritised for major investment in the NT had signed long term leasing arrangements. In the NT, township leasing has made it possible to grant long term subleases for economic purposes and home ownership. Voluntary leases are being negotiated currently in the smaller communities so housing works can commence as soon as possible.

An example of how the NPARIH is working “on the ground”

The NT community of Wadeye has a population of around 2,000 and is located 270 kilometres south-west of the NT capital, Darwin. In Wadeye more than 105 new houses have been built through the NPARIH and a further 117 houses rebuilt or refurbished, increasing the number of houses in the community by close to 60 per cent in two years. Seventy of these new houses have been built in two new subdivisions with new roads and power lines in place. This has reduced tensions associated with overcrowding of existing housing in Wadeye.

A local Indigenous business, the Thamarrurr Development Corporation, has constructed and provided concrete for 49 new houses. In Wadeye, more than 25 per cent Indigenous employment has been achieved in new housing construction, and improvements have been made in construction management systems.

How can I find out more?

The FaHCSIA website www.fahcsia.gov.au includes further information on Indigenous reforms and assistance arrangements.

NPARIH REVIEW STEERING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Preamble

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is a ten-year funding strategy ‘to reform responsibilities between the Commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities and to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities’. The NPARIH includes provision for a review of progress in 2012 and 2017 by the parties towards achieving the agreed outcomes, to be conducted by an independent party engaged by the Commonwealth (NPARIH clauses 35-36). The NPARIH is part of the COAG reform framework and subject to the provisions of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA).

Role and Purpose

The Steering Group provides oversight to the NPARIH Review. The Steering Group will:

- in line with the agreed scope, provide direction and advice on the NPARIH Review;
- provide a forum for stakeholders to influence the Review;
- consider reforms under the NPARIH and their progress towards achieving NPARIH outcomes by 2018; and
- facilitate reporting to the Select Council on Housing and Homelessness (SCoHH).

Term

Steering Group activities will continue until the review is complete and the report has been endorsed by the Housing Ministers’ Advisory Committee and accepted by the SCoHH.

Membership

Members of the group include:

Ms Caroline Edwards – Chair

Group Manager, Strategic Priorities and Remote Housing

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Mr Mike Allen - NSW Joint Steering Committee

Chief Executive Officer, Housing NSW, Aboriginal Housing Office

Mr John Baskerville - NT Joint Steering Committee

Chief Executive, Department of Housing and Department of Local Government

Mr Tony Waters – Qld Joint Steering Committee

Deputy Director-General (Housing Services)

Department of Housing and Public Works

Communities within Australia where NPARIH housing, new builds and/or refurbishments, had been completed as at 31 December 2012.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Armidale
Baradine
Bourke
Buronga
Brewarrina
Cobar
Collarenebri
Coonamble
Dubbo
Enngonia
Euston
Gol Gol
Goodooga
Gulgargambone
Hillston
Ivanhoe
Lake Cargelligo
Lightning Ridge
Menindee
Moree
Mungindi
Narrabri
Nyngan
Tamworth
Wagga Wagga
Weilmoringle
Wentworth
Dareton
Walgett
Wilcannia

QUEENSLAND

Aurukun
Camooweal (Mt Isa)
Charleville
Coen
Cooktown (Cairns)
Doomadgee
Hope Vale
Horn and Thursday Is
(TSRA)

Bamaga
New Mapoon
Injinoo
Seisia
Umagico
Kowanyama
Lockhart River
Longreach
Mapoon
Mitchell (Roma)
Mornington Island
Napranum
Northern Peninsula Area
Regional Council
Palm Island
Pormpuraaw
St George (Roma)
Torres Strait Islands
Woorabinda
Wujal Wujal

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Amata
Dunjiba
Fregon
Indulkana
Kalka
Koonibba
Mimilli
Pipalyatjara
Pukatja
Yalata

TASMANIA

Cape Barren Island
Flinders Island

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Ardyaloon (Broome)
Beagle Bay (Broome)
Bayulu
Bidyadanga (Broome)
Bindi Bindi (Onslow Town Camp) Sth
Hedland
Burawa (Fitzroy Town Camp)
Budulah (Derby Town Camp)
Bondini (Wiluna Town Reserve)
Bungardi (Fitzroy Crossing Town Camp)
Bobeiding (Broome)
Coonana (Kalgoorlie)

Boulder
Darlgunaya (Fitzroy Crossing Town
Camp)
Djarindjin (Broome)
Djagerari (Derby)
Djimung Nguda (Derby Town Camp)
Gillaroong
Guda Guda
Junjuwa (Fitzroy crossing)
Jigalong (Sth Hedland)
Joy Springs
Kalumburu (Kununurra)
Koongie Park
Kalgoorlie
Karmulinunga (Derby Town Camp)
Koorabye
Kundat Djaru (Ringers Soak)
Kupungarri (Mt Burnett Stn, Derby)
Kurnangki (Fitzroy Crossing Town Camp)
AMOS (Mt Margaret)
Looma
Loanbun (Parukupan /Fitzroy Crossing)
Kurrawang (Kalgoorlie) Blackstone
Mardiwah Loop (Halls Creek)
Mindi Bungu
Mirima (Wyndham Town Camp)
Mindi Rardi (Fitzroy Town Camp)
Mowanjum (Derby)
Mulan
Muludja
Nulleywah (Kununurra Town Camp)
Mungullah (Upper Gascoyne Town Camp,
Carnarvon)
Nicholson Block (Yumali) Halls Creek
Town Camp
Pandanus Park (Derby)
Red Hill (Halls Creek)
Pia Wadjari (Mullewa)
Tjuntjuntjara (Kalgoorlie)
Wakathuni
Warburton
Wangkatjunga
Warrayu
Wannan (Kalgoorlie)
Warmun (Turkey Creek, Kununurra ICC)
Wingellina
Wirrimanu (Balgo) Kununurra ICC
Woolah
Wongatha Wonganara (Laverton Town
Camp)

Yakanarra
Yandeyarra
Yardgee (Town Camp Halls Creek)
Kununurra ICC
Yiyili (Halls Creek) on Louisa Downs Stn
Yungngora (Noonkanbah Stn, Fitzroy
Crossing)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Nguiu (Tiwi Islands)
Pirlangimpi (Tiwi Islands)
Milikapiti (Tiwi Islands)
Tennant Creek (Town Camps)
Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt)
Angurugu (Groote Eylandt)
Milyakburra (Groote Eylandt)
Maningrida
Minjilang
Warruwi
Wadeye
Nganmarriyanga (Palumpa)
Peppimenarti
Gunbalanya
Belyuen
Acacia Larrakia
Galiwinku
Ali Curung
Wilora
Nturiya
Pmara Jutunta
Tara
Laramba
Willowra
Engawala
Imangara
Amoonguna
Areyonga
Atitjere
SantaTeresa
Wallace Rock Hole
Yuelamu
Imanpa
Alpurrurulam
Titjikala
Kintore
Mt Liebig
Canteen Creek
Wutungurra
Nyirripi
Alice Springs

Ngukurr
Barunga
Rittarangu
Lajamanu
Bulla
Yarralin
Binjari
Ampilatwatja
Haast Bluff
Beswick
Bulman
Kaltukatjara
Papunya
Jilkminggan (Duck Creek)
Minyerri
Weemol
Amanbidji
Daguragu
Kalkarindji
Kybrook Farm
Gunyangara
Pigeon Hole
Ramingining
Eva Valley
Hermannsburg
Milingimbi
Gapuwiyak
Numbulwar

Appendix 6 provides examples of capital infrastructure developed or replaced in the Northern Territory remote communities of Maningrida and Wadeye under NPARIH.

This document was provided to the reviewer by the Northern Territory Government. For further information contact the [Northern Territory Government Department of Housing](#).

Property and Tenancy Management - Jurisdiction Arrangements

Summaries

WESTERN AUSTRALIA PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In Western Australia Housing Management Agreements (HMAs) provide the legal basis on which property and tenancy management services are provided in the remote Indigenous communities where housing capital works under NPARIH have commenced. Through the HMAs 40 year lease arrangements are in place to deliver a range of property and tenancy management services. WA has implemented its Social Housing Practice Implementation Project (SHPIP) since July 2012 which is designed to deliver public housing like standardised property and tenancy management arrangements and practices for remote Indigenous housing.

Key features of the WA property and tenancy management reforms include:

- A reformed rent policy is due to commence introduction in July 2013 in communities with an HMA. The rent policy is income base and consistent with public housing arrangements. Current tenancy agreements are based on pre-reform rent.
- Tenancy support is provided to communities under HMAs and to non-HMA communities where pre HMA tenancy agreements are in place.
- Repairs and maintenance (R&M) is undertaken in response to problems identified by tenants and in property inspections. Routine property inspections are undertaken twice a year. R&M is also provided to non-HMA communities under previous tenancy agreements.
- Housing is either directly managed by the WA government or by contracted service providers.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

South Australia has developed a suite of policies to support property and tenancy management under NPARIH. These have been developed in consultation with Local Community Councils and Housing Committees.

In most cases the South Australia Government (SAG) has direct responsibility for the provision of both housing and property and tenancy management within communities under long-term lease arrangements, with property and tenancy management services rolling out in conjunction with capital works activity. The SAG has also develop an Indigenous community housing model which it intends to use as a pilot should communities express an interest in self-management.

The key elements of property and tenancy arrangements under NPARIH in South Australia are:

Tenancy Management

- Planned implementation of a new household based rent framework from 1 July 2013

- Tenancy agreements under NPARIH have been developed in line with the South Australia Residential Tenancy Act.
- The SAG has developed, and is using, a range of tools to support the delivery of tenancy management services in remote and non-remote Indigenous communities including:
 - A home living skills program, which includes a train the trainer program
 - A guide to living in your home, based on the 9 healthy living principles
 - A tenancy management guide that highlights rights and responsibilities

Property Management

- A rolling tenancy audit in 2012 provided detailed information about household composition, current housing standards and housing requirements. This will inform both capital and property and tenancy management reforms throughout NPARIH.
- A multi-trade contracting model has been implemented to cover planned, cyclical, responsive, emergency and vacancy maintenance in the APY Lands. Maintenance services are delivered to communities outside the APY through mainstream maintenance services.
- An asset management system called CHINTARO is being used to update existing tenancy details, add new household information following house allocations, and manage planned and responsive maintenance requests in a centralised information system.

VICTORIA PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In Victoria, property and tenancy management reforms focus on the Indigenous Community Housing Organisation (ICHO) sector which operates in non-remote areas. The Victorian government is assisting ICHOs to work towards one of three options:

1. Registration as a housing agency;
2. Partnership with a registered agency; or
3. Accreditation.

Participating ICHOs will have ongoing support and will have the opportunity to access funding to build organisational capacity and implement associated property and tenancy management reforms which aim to build a professional and sustainable sector that delivers quality services to tenants. ICHOs that agree to participate in the reforms are eligible to have properties upgraded to ensure they can charge fair rents and can continue to provide quality housing services into the future.

NORTHERN TERRITORY PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Property and tenancy reforms introduced by the Northern Territory Government (NTG) under the NPARIH have doubled the size of the NT's entire remote public housing stock to around 5,000 houses covering about 40,000 people - about 20 per cent of the entire Northern Territory population.

Tenancy Management System

The NTG were already utilising a Tenancy Management System (TMS) for the management of their urban public housing and have progressively applied this system to include the NT's

remote housing stock. At the time of this report, the NTG have largely applied the TMS to all of the NTG remote housing stock with the exception of a minor amount of stock which has been delayed by local community issues (e.g. land tenure) but is envisaged will be brought under the TMS in time.

TMS offers the NTG visibility over individual house condition, tenant information including the status of rental contributions and a suite of reporting functions. Since the introduction of property and tenancy reforms, the NTG have monitored rental revenue and have noted a consistent rise with the implementation of the TMS.

The amount of rent charged is calculated as a percentage of each tenant's income type and is also based on the condition of the house and an assessment of the total household income (capped between 8 - 23 per cent) of the household income.

Service Level Agreements

NT Government currently uses a mixture of Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with shires and direct local contracts with Indigenous Business Enterprises or corporations for the delivery of property and tenancy maintenance services. Included in the agreements for property and tenancy maintenance services are Indigenous employment targets which have been set by the NTG. The employment targets require 40 per cent Indigenous employment for property management and 50 per cent Indigenous employment for tenancy management. It is worth noting that the NTG have consistently exceeded these employment targets.

SLA's include specific categories and associated response times for different types of repairs and maintenance to a house. The NTG are reviewing their current SLA arrangements with the intention of requesting tender applications for property and tenancy services including repairs and maintenance services. The tender process is expected to be complete later in the year.

Intensive Tenancy Support Program

In preparing to sign a formal Tenancy Agreement, tenants undergo a specialised program to assist them to understand their rights and responsibilities under a formal Tenancy Agreement. The program is called the Intensive Tenancy Support Program (ITSP) and covers six specific topics:

- Understanding the Tenancy Agreement
- Transitional Arrangements
- Managing Money and resources
- Managing visitors
- Household orientation and functionality and
- Maintaining a safe, healthy and hygienic home

Under the ITSP tenants will receive follow-up support including regular visits, this may continue for a period of around six weeks after the property has been formally handed over to the tenant. The efficacy of the implementation of the ITSP is variable across the various regions but is expected to be invigorated with the proposed complementary Healthy Homes initiative.

Housing Reference Groups

The NTG has established Housing Reference Groups (HRG) to facilitate discussions with community about housing needs. The HRG provide advice to the NTG on cultural and family related matters that may impact housing decisions. HRG members are a cross section of community representatives including Traditional Owners, Elders and special interest groups. Territory Housing has established guidelines for the operation of HRGs and has responsibility at the regional level for their establishment and facilitating their ongoing operation.

TASMANIA PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Tasmania has two remote communities, Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island. On both islands community housing is managed by Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs). Both ICHOs manage housing to public housing like standards in line with requirements of funding agreements with the Tasmanian Government. The model is consistent with Tasmanian public housing policies procedures and aligns with Tasmanian Standards for Governance and Management of Aboriginal Housing. All houses constructed or refurbished under NPARIH have tenancy agreements in place.

The key elements of property and tenancy arrangements under NPARIH in Tasmania are:

Rent

- Rent setting models are in place with both ICHO's with new arrangements implemented in February 2012 as follows:
 - On Flinders Island rent policy is based on a percentage of household income.
 - On Cape Barren Island rent is based on a percentage of market rent.

Repairs and Maintenance

- Housing management plans covering all ICHO housing stock is in place to ensure properties are maintained in line with the Tasmanian Residential Tenancy Act 1997.
- ICHOs are responsible for the provision of repairs and maintenance.
- Urgent and emergency repairs are completed as soon as possible.
- Other repairs are undertaken within 28 days.

Tenancy Support

- A policy has been developed for intensive tenant support for the early identification and intervention for tenancies at risk for both communities to be provided by both ICHOs. Implementation has commenced.

Property and Tenancy Management Compliance

- The Tasmanian Government has reached agreement with both ICHOs to ensure continued property and tenancy management compliance by regular monitoring and use of an assessment tool to monitor 'public housing like' reforms.

QUEENSLAND PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Queensland Government introduced its One Social Housing System (OSHS) in 2009, with the intention of incorporating social rental housing, for which it had responsibility, in remote Indigenous communities.

Prior to the NPARIH, discussions had commenced with Indigenous Local Government Councils about the new OSHS arrangements, including reformed rents and ongoing repairs and maintenance programs.

These arrangements have been further developed under the NPARIH, with the added requirement for secure tenure over land to be in place for social housing, through leases or similar mechanisms, for at least 40 years.

The key elements of property and tenancy arrangements under the OSHS are:

Tenancy Management

- Implementation in remote Indigenous communities is consistent with arrangements that apply to all social housing in Queensland.
- The Community Housing Rent Policy for Indigenous Councils is based on rent policies applied under OSHS more broadly, with rents assessed according to income, and ranging from 10per cent to 25per cent of assessable income depending on the circumstances of the tenant.
- Tenant support, or living skills support, programs are currently being developed.
- Tenancy support will be further strengthened through the recruitment and training of community based tenancy staff, including Local Housing Officers.

Property Management

- Property management in remote communities in Queensland is undertaken in accordance with the asset management life cycle used by the Queensland Government to manage all social housing assets.
- The asset management life cycle is included in a Housing Improvement Plan for each community, which provides the basis for developing and implementing housing improvement strategies in the communities.
- A comprehensive rolling program of repairs and maintenance is in place for all houses in remote communities, with regular inspection visits throughout the year.

NEW SOUTH WALES PROPERTY AND TENANCY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In New South Wales (NSW) tenancy management reform is based on implementation of the NSW Build and Grow Aboriginal Housing Strategy. Under Build and Grow, the responsibility of tenancy management including establishing tenancy agreements, lies with Indigenous Community Housing Organisations. Housing providers are required to participate in Build and Grow to access programs funding by NPARIH such as refurbishment programs.

The Build and Grow strategy is based on the reforms implemented across the mainstream community housing sector over the last 15 years. It is designed to deliver a robust, regulated Aboriginal community housing sector that operates as effectively as the mainstream community housing sector in NSW.

The Build and Grow Rent Policy, released in March 2011, requires rent charged to be based on property rent or household rent, whichever is lower. Property rents are based on local private market rents, whereas household rents are determined by family size.

Key features of the reforms include:

- A state-wide approach covering providers in remote and non-remote areas
- All Aboriginal community housing providers have the opportunity to become an approved provider based on a modified version of the mainstream community housing registration criteria developed by the Office of the Registrar of Community Housing
- Incentives of operating subsidies to assist with ongoing repairs and maintenance costs and the provision of capital upgrades for providers to participate in and meet the conditions of the reform process
- Assistance to providers to develop capacity, increase rents and capture Commonwealth Rent Assistance and increase the size of property management portfolios where appropriate
- Option for providers who do not want to become an approved provider or are unable to meet registration criteria to head lease their stock to the Aboriginal Housing Office to be managed by an approved provider. Stock under head lease will also be eligible for upgrade.
- Investment in capacity building, business development and asset management
- Ongoing performance monitoring of performance of Aboriginal community housing providers.
- Implementation of a new rent framework
- A requirement for providers to develop robust asset management strategies as part of the registration process for providers under the Provider Accredited Registration System.

Appendix 8 provides a selection of tenant support material developed by different jurisdictions, for example:

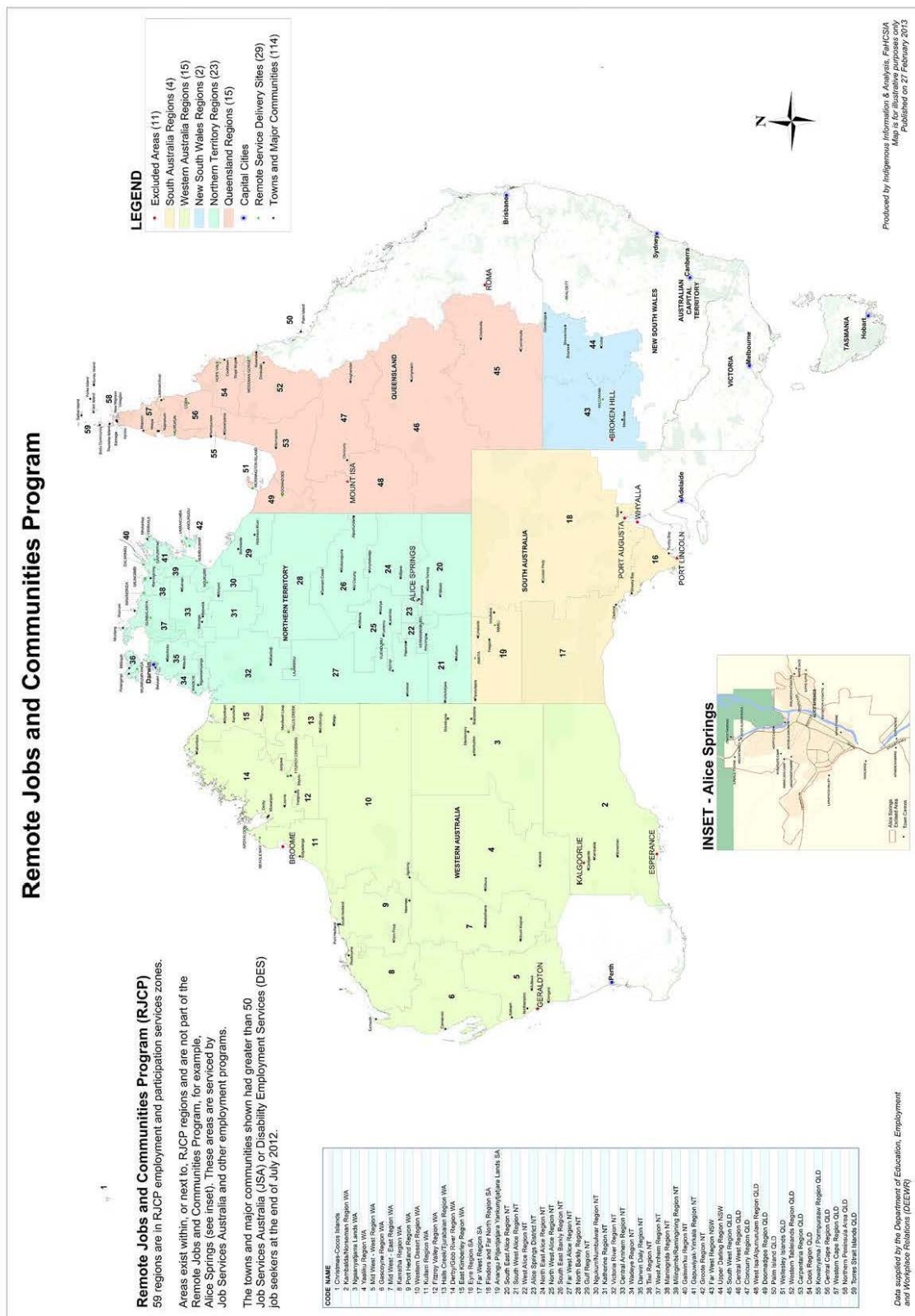
South Australia has developed tenant support material that it has delivered through local people. For further information on this contact the [South Australian Government Department for Communities and Social Inclusion](#).

NSW has developed a [Healthy, Happy Homes Kit](#) for tenants.

Northern Territory has in place an Intensive Tenant Support Program for use by Housing Department staff in supporting new tenants. For further information on this contact the [Northern Territory Government Department of Housing](#).

Western Australia has developed a tenancy support tool called My Home My Tenancy. For further information contact the [Western Australian Government Department of Housing](#).

Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) – Fact Sheet and Location Map



The Australian Government is introducing significant reforms to employment, participation and community-development services in remote Australia to help more people get into jobs and participate in their communities.

From 1 July 2013 the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) will provide a more streamlined and flexible employment and participation service in remote Australia. With funding of \$1.5 billion over five years, the new program will build on the strengths of existing services: Job Services Australia (JSA), Disability Employment Services (DES), the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) and Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP).

In 2011 the Government reviewed remote employment services to find out what is working and what isn't. Many people in remote Australia said that, while existing services provide short-term help, they are not delivering long-term results. Those who spoke to the Australian Government wanted local people to have the training and support they need to get local jobs.

The design of the RJCP reflects the Government's view that everyone who can work should work. Remote job seekers, including those on CDEP wages, will be given the personalised support they need to take up opportunities. Those who cannot get a job will participate in meaningful activities that will contribute to their communities as well as making them more work ready.

There will be a single service provider with a permanent presence in each of 59 remote regions, giving job seekers, communities, employers and others a single, local point of contact for employment and participation services.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE RJCP

Community-led development

Remote communities will have a strong say in how providers develop and deliver services. Working together, local people and providers will set priorities and goals through the Community Action Plans developed for each region. These plans will ensure that providers and government are clear about local priorities for participation, training, employment and long-term development. Providers will be guided by communities as they implement the plan.

Better employment services

Job seekers will receive personalised support from the single provider so their skill development, participation activities and training meet their needs and better match local job opportunities. Providers will also focus on non-vocational barriers to ensure job seekers have the ability to participate in community or work activities.

A new flexible Participation Account will provide funding to help people become job ready and participate in activities to benefit their community.

Wider participation

All members of the community will be encouraged to participate in community activities. There will be more support for all community members, especially young people, women and people with disability, to find work. Those with limited capacity to work will be able to make a meaningful contribution through community-development activities.

Strong participation requirements

The RJCP's strong focus on participation demonstrates the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring funding is targeted effectively to get people into jobs – and that people who receive income support actively participate in return for this support. People who fail to meet their participation requirements may have their payments suspended. For people on CDEP wages, the 'No Work No Pay' rule will continue to be applied consistently across all remote regions.

Support for young people

To establish a clear pathway from school to work, young people aged 24 and under will be able to benefit from the new Remote Youth Leadership and Development Corps. There will be up to 12,000 places available over five years. During a program of up to 12 months, participants may access mentoring from local leaders, help with literacy and numeracy, work experience with local industries, vocational training at the Certificate II level, and support to move to find work or undertake education or training.

More development opportunities

A five-year \$237.5 million Community Development Fund will support projects that provide employment and participation opportunities for local people and are consistent with the direction of the Community Action Plan.

Continued support for employers

Employers will benefit from more streamlined servicing arrangements. RJCP providers will be able to deliver a wide range of special assistance to local businesses. Each provider will engage with local employers in developing a Workforce Development Strategy for their region. Around \$5 million will be set aside each year to help the new program engage with potential employers and support regional economic development.

Stability for long-term CDEP participants

CDEP wages will continue to be paid to eligible participants until 30 June 2017. In the remote regions, CDEP wages will be administered by RJCP providers.

Support in non-remote areas

Some CDEPs operate in areas outside the remote regions. From 1 July 2013, CDEP participants in these areas will transition to a single servicing arrangement under JSA or DES. Eligible CDEP participants will continue to access wages and activities similar to those they are currently undertaking. These arrangements will be reviewed before 30 June 2015.